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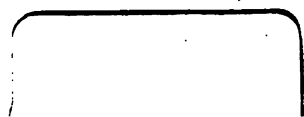
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IN CHRISTO.

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IN CHRISTO
OR
THE MONOGRAM OF ST. PAUL.

BY
J. R. MACDUFF, D.D.



"It was what Paul was *IN Christ*, which gives that peculiar soul-winning attraction to his preaching *OF Christ*."

BESSER'S "BIBELSTUNDEN."

"The Salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every Epistle: so I write."

2 THESS. i. 17.

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**PATRI MATRI
IN CHRISTO**

PREFACE AND INTRODUCTION.

“**D**ID it ever occur to you,” says a gifted writer, “to count the number of times in St. Paul’s Epistles, in which the phrases ‘*in Christ*,’ and its equivalents ‘in Him,’ and ‘in the Lord’ are to be found?”¹

With singular, and very notable iteration, no less indeed than on thirty-three occasions, do the words “IN CHRIST” alone, independent of these equivalents, occur.²

This Volume is an attempt to gather the characteristic expression (or occasionally where the Apostle’s thought and meaning are more suggestive, the latter), as themes of meditation.³

I have used the word “*Monogram*” on the title-page and throughout, from the difficulty of finding any

¹ Dean Howson’s Hulsean Lectures.

² Besides these, as we shall afterwards find, our translators in their rendering have occasionally adopted the preposition “through,” when it is “in” (ἐν) in the original.

³ In case any may care to employ them as daily readings, they are numbered so as to extend over a month.

other that would better describe the favourite phrase. This IN CHRISTO is the *cor cordium* of his writings: the key-note,—the one master-chord which vibrates and pulsates through the whole divine symphony; recalling, as an Old Testament parallel, the watchword of the Great Elijah—"Jehovah liveth."¹

Are his Epistles a temple of living stones? IN CHRISTO is the superscription on the portico. Does he speak of running the Christian race? IN CHRISTO is the sacred torch he holds aloft in pressing towards the goal, and which he hands down to his successors in all ages. Is the badge assigned to him by the early Church—the sword of conquest entwined with a garland of victory? IN CHRISTO, if we can venture to employ a modern term to the acknowledged chief of the spiritual aristocracy, is the heraldic motto encircling it. "Thou hast given a banner," says the Psalmist, "to them that fear thee:"—IN CHRISTO was the banner-device of this illustrious champion of the faith. Like a clarion-note, it rises clear and loud above 'the shout and shell of battle.' It was solely in the mystic, but very real significance of the grand *spiritual* verity therein expressed, that

¹ Favourite epithets and phrases occur in the writings of more than one of the sacred penmen, suggested by some special incidents in their lives. Note (for example), St. Peter's frequent reference to his Divine Master, as "the Shepherd," "the Chief Shepherd," "the Shepherd and Bishop of Souls:"—emblems which the memories of the Lake-shore—"Feed my sheep," "Feed my Lambs," are surely sufficient very naturally to account for. The IN CHRISTO of the other Apostle does not require to be explained by any similar suggestion or association.

he would have accepted the otherwise unauthorised 'nimbus' and 'halo' with which the devout painters of early and mediæval ages cinctured his brow. If, like a second Moses on the Heavenly Mount, his countenance shone, he would allow it to be only with a borrowed, reflected lustre:—"the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in" (from) "the face of Jesus Christ." All the above and similar comparisons, indeed, fall short of his own comprehensive epigrammatic utterance—"The life hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3). Well may the gilded lettering gleam on the baldacchino of the Roman Basilica which tradition claims for his tomb—" *Mihi, vivere, CHRISTUS est.*"¹

On two other occasions alone are St. Paul's distinguishing words used in the New Testament. One of these is in a historical reference to the Apostle, defining the topic of his preaching before Felix. But even that is coupled with an allusion to the familiar phrase, "concerning the *faith* IN CHRIST" (Acts xxiv. 24). The other occurs in the 1st Epistle of St. Peter (iii. 16). And may not this latter claim, too, a similar

¹ According to the strong and emphatic meaning of the original, he made his '*boast*' IN CHRIST. Although rendered by the same in our translation, there are two different words in the Greek, when he speaks in the commencement of Phil. iii. of "rejoicing in the Lord" (χαίρειν ἐν Κυρίῳ) (ver. 1): and "rejoicing in Christ Jesus" (καυχόμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), lit. 'making our boast in Christ Jesus' (ver. 3), rising in the latter to the more exultant term. It is the same word which is employed in his great Galatian motto—verse—"God forbid that I should glory (or boast), save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. vi. 14).

pedigree? Is it not more than probable that, like a strain of music, it may have lingered in the memory of the Apostle of the circumcision, as a relic of the hallowed converse enjoyed more than once with "his beloved Brother Paul": more especially during those never-to-be-forgotten days, when they abode together under the same roof at Jerusalem, and spake together of "the things touching the King" (Gal. i. 18)?

If the Monogram, as I have thus ventured to call it, was peculiarly St. Paul's own in Gospel times, it was not so afterwards. He seems, at all events, to have bequeathed the words as a precious souvenir to those who in a subsequent age followed his steps and shared his crown. To the writer, it is one of the most touching and interesting remembrances of a sojourn in the city of the Apostle's later years and martyrdom, how, in the Roman Catacombs, with their computed six millions of buried Christians, the mourners and survivors of the martyred dead had served themselves heirs to the same divine "graffito" of the greatest of the Fathers! How remarkable to trace, ever and anon, inscriptions in rude lettering of the IN CHRISTO, either found within, or else taken from, these strangest of burial grounds.¹ I quote the following, not from

¹ The slabs and inscriptions are chiefly to be seen in the singular collection in the Vatican. Some in the Museum of St. John Lateran, or that of the Capitol. (See note at end of Preface.) Moreover, while the Catacombs have thus largely contributed, it may be well also to state that many of these slabs and sculptured sarcophagi were discovered in the *Vestibules* or under the pavement of the early Basilicas.

memory, but from the accurate pages of those who have had leisure to transcribe the tracings, often incomplete, and to a hurried visitor, difficult to decipher.

"VICTORINA, IN PACE ET IN CHRISTO" (Victorina—in peace, and IN CHRIST).¹

"Fortunatus, in his lifetime, made this for himself, in order that when he should rest in peace, IN CHRIST, he might have his grave prepared."

"Marius Vitellianus, to his most faithful wife Primitiva . . . mayest thou live" (vivas) "IN CHRIST."

"Ursula, thou art accepted IN CHRIST" (URSULA, ACCEPTA SIS IN CHRISTO).

This latter is followed by a double '*Chrism*' (the word now generally employed to describe the Christian monogram). An accurate explorer has noted, as a formula common on the sepulchral stones of the primitive Christians—"Spes IN CHRISTO." "Spes IN DEO." "Spes IN CHRISTO DEO." This, in conjunction not unfrequently with the symbolic Anchor (as in the crypt of St. Lucina). "Which hope" (*spes*) "we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus:" (the hope IN CHRIST,—the anchor cast in the Rock of Ages), (Heb. vi. 19, 20). A seal found among other smaller articles (see p. xv. of Preface) bears the similar legend—"Spes IN EO" (Hope IN HIM). The following inscription is

¹ See note, end of Preface.

from a sarcophagus of the fourth or fifth century:—"Here lies Paulina in the place of the blessed. Pacata, to whom she was nurse, buried her. A lovable, and holy person, IN CHRIST." On a slab or "tabula"¹ in a wall of the Vatican Library, we have—"Vitalis, buried on Saturday. Kalends of August. IN CHRIST, the First and the Last:"—(The *Chrism* being added to this, with the Greek Alpha and Omega). "Aselus sleeps IN CHRIST." "Irene, in peace. Her mother Agape set up this. IN CHRIST."² Touching testimony, first of all, as to how fondly they treasured the name, character, and inspired teaching of him, whom Chrysostom, in one of his golden phrases, calls "the heart of the world." But a testimony also, equally strong,

¹ "On the slabs of the earlier loculi, e.g., in the cemeteries of Priscilla and Domitilla, the name is only painted in red and black pigment, not cut or scratched. . . . When engraved, the letters are often coloured with vermillion."—Canon Venables.

² Those who are curious in such matters, can consult, in the British Museum Library (in addition to De Rossi's gigantic work, "*Roma Sotteranea*"), the folio volume of Marco Boldetti (Rome 1720), with its quaint but faithful reproductions. The most remarkable of these inscriptions have been well rendered by Mr. Maitland in his more accessible Volume, "*The Church in the Catacombs*," along with much valuable material of his own. It may be interesting to add that the most assiduous—we may well say the most extraordinary collector of Christian Inscriptions, was a young scholar who lived at the close of the last century, by name Gætano Marini. The result of thirty-five years devotion was bequeathed to the Vatican Library, and afterwards compiled by De Rossi, in his 31 volumes, containing no less than 8600 inscriptions in Latin, and 750 in Greek, gathered from all countries. Among other epitaphs deciphered by Marini bearing on our theme, are—"Accepta sis IN CHRISTO." "Aeterna tibi lux IN CHRISTO" (450-454).—See Dic. of Christian Antiquities. Art. "*Inscriptions*."

as to the wealth of import which was deemed to be included in the phrase itself; meeting, as it did, alike present experiences and aspirations, and boundless future hopes: comprising, in one glorious, emphatic, all-comprehensive word, assurances of peace in life, peace in trouble, peace in death, peace in eternity.

From these slumbering ashes of the Catacombs of St. Calixtus, that requiem comes down to us, if we can so express it, in its own dumb and silent significance,—its own unimpaired majesty of comfort and peerless privilege. CIVIS ROMANUS SUM, was a proud claim and assertion of the ancient Roman. What is it to the IN CHRISTO of the humblest of God's children? "*In Christ*:"—You in Christ, and "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27). Let us aspire to realise the infinite fulness treasured up IN *Him*. He is the same this day as he was to Paul; the same as He was to the loyal band who loved to grave His name, and their sacred interest in that name, as a conspicuous portion of the epitaph on the tombs of their sainted dead. There are those who would travestie the words and meaning of a great poet; those who, false to all the sacred traditions and beliefs of the past, would

"Ring in the Christ that is to be."

"The Christ that is to be," is the Christ that *is*, and the Christ that *was*, to the glorious company of the Apostles and the noble army of martyrs: the Christ, regarding whom this is the ambition of His

noblest follower—"That I may win Him, and be found IN HIM, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is, through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. iii. 9).

St. Paul (and remember he was no mystic, but the most intensely practical of men) speaks of "all spiritual blessings IN CHRIST" (Eph. i. 3). Some of the more prominent of these, as suggested by his own inspired pen, are to be traced in the pages which follow: although I can truly say, in the words of Luther—"I have scarcely been able to bring to light more than a few little fragments and broken pieces from this most rich and precious mine."¹

After what has just been said, it need hardly be added (though it may be well at once to state on the

¹ A distinguished living scholar thus lucidly adverts to the salient article in St. Paul's writings which is to occupy us in the sequel. Speaking of the false ethical teachings which had crept into a particular Church, and which were deceiving many who were honestly striving after truth:—"It was," says he, "the one purpose of Christianity to solve that very problem which had exercised their minds. IN CHRIST they would find the answer which they sought. His life, His cross, and resurrection was the guarantee; His Person, the Word Incarnate, was the solution. . . . They had attempted to fence themselves about, and to purify their lives by a code of rigorous prohibitions. Their energy was expended in battling with the physical conditions of human life. Their whole mind was absorbed in the struggle with imaginary forms of evil. . . . St. Paul sets himself to combat this false tendency. For negative prohibitions he substitutes a positive principle; for special enactments, a comprehensive motive. He tells them that all their scrupulous restrictions are vain, because they

threshold), that the treatment of the ensuing chapters is mainly, if not entirely, practical. I beg the reader also not to expect in these any adherence to chronological sequence. The title of the Book having guided and indeed restricted in the selection of themes, the meditations could not well be linked together by systematic arrangement or consecutive thought. The order adopted, therefore, is entirely arbitrary ; each portion being independent of what precedes or follows.

Yet another and more needed observation must be made in summing up these prefatory remarks. It is one of a purely personal kind.

The author can most truly aver, that more than once in the course of composing this Volume, has he laid down his pen and hesitated to commit its pages to the

fail to touch the springs of action. . . . They must transfer themselves into a wholly new sphere of energy. This transference is nothing less than a migration from earth to heaven, from the region of the external and transitory to the region of the spiritual and eternal. For a code of rules, they must substitute a principle of life. . . . This principle they have IN CHRIST. With Him, they have died to the world ; with Him, they have risen to God. Christ, the Revelation of God's holiness, of God's righteousness, of God's love, is light, is life, is heaven. With Him they have been translated into a higher sphere ; have been brought face to face with the Eternal Presence. Let them only realise this translation. It involves new insight, new motives, new energies. They will no more waste themselves upon vexatious special restrictions, for they will be furnished with a higher inspiration which will cover all the minute details of action. They will kill the whole body of their earthly passions, through the strong arm of this personal communion with God IN CHRIST."—(Bishop Lightfoot on the Epistle to the Colossians.)



* * Like the above, the most of the other mottoes and monograms in the small woodcuts inserted at the close of each chapter, are copied from those found in the Roman Catacombs. The greater number of the originals, as already stated, are now in the Lapidarian Gallery, confronting a row of Pagan Epitaphs on similar sepulchral stones. The circular woodcut with the inscription *SPES DEI* and the *Chrism* (the two combined being rendered "My hope is in God, Christ"), is from a stamp about an inch and a half in diameter. The *P* (Greek *ρ*) of the monogram is made to serve for the Latin *P* in the word '*Spes*': (given in Boldetti). The one with the crown and palm conjoined, and an olive wreath encircling the *Chrism*, was taken from the tomb of *FLAVIA JOVINA*, a child of three years, referred by Baronius to A.D. 367. A similar one with the same inscription (*IN PACE*) is over the tomb of *Faustina*. The palm-branch is a symbol constantly "incised on the slab or scratched on the mortar." The square cube-like box suspended by a chain, with the *Chrism* and *Alpha* and *Omega* on either side, is also in the Vatican Gallery, and is supposed to have been used for containing the communion elements (see Maitland, p. 219). The simple monogram with the inscription above—"IN HOC VINCES IN CHRISTO" ('in this thou shalt conquer, in Christ'), was discovered by Bosio, and is supposed to be of the time of Constantine. As is well known, it is the Latin rendering of the Greek inscription on his famous *Labarum*—'Εν τούτῳ νικά. The epitaph on the grave beneath was to "*Sinfonia* and her sons." *SINFONIA ET FILIIS* (See *Ib.* in loc.). There is a curious device which I have not ventured to render in woodcut, from the difficulty of doing so. It may possibly represent the furnace on which the female martyr, *VICTORINA*, already referred to, was consumed, with an instrument of torture above. It is of triangular form with the rude

indication of flames at the top (see this last copied and described in *Bol-detti*, p. 318). I am aware, however, that recent archæologists question, in this and other similar devices, any reference to a martyr-symbol.

It may not be out of place to add, that in addition to the many 'tabulæ,' either of mortar or marble, which bear the Christian monogram, the latter appears under a variety of treatment in vast numbers of lamps, principally of terra-cotta, but some made of bronze, silver, and amber, which have been unearthed in the course of excavations. The same writer ("Dictionary of Christian Antiquities") to whom I am indebted for this reminiscence of the Lapidarian Gallery, adds the interesting fact, that (in appropriate contrast with the symbol of the new economy), "the lamps found in the Jewish Catacombs almost universally bear the seven-branched candlestick."

IN HOC VINCES



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I.

WITHOUT CHRIST,

“Without Christ.”—Ephes. ii. 12.

“IN CHRIST.”—2 Cor. xii. 2.



HOUGH out of harmony with the subsequent headings, let us, in order to give intensity to the lights of the inspired picture, begin with the one deep shadow—the contrasted truth, which is made by the Apostle to occupy the background.

Awful record, surely, in the pages of every human diary (Paul himself knew the entry once, with its dismal lettering),—“At that time ye were WITHOUT CHRIST.” Travellers amid blinding snow and rush of avalanche;—beyond sight of home or hospice;—vessels tossed, unpiloted, and rudderless, in the thick darkness;—planets wandering in ever more devious orbits from their great central sun;—“WITHOUT *Christ!*”

This is not the place, nor is it needful, to enlarge on that great crisis in the Apostle’s history with which every reader is so familiar, when, “as he journeyed towards Damascus,” the Persecutor was

arrested; when he who fell to the ground a fiery zealot and bigot Pharisee, rose a meek disciple of the Crucified Jesus—wondering, trembling, believing, rejoicing!—the vulture changed into the dove, the lion into the lamb. Ambrose may well speak of the conversion of Paul as “the most glorious deed of Christ the King, next to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.” “Grace came, omnipotent grace; and the rampart of that great soul fell like the walls of Jericho; the impregnable city was carried, and all its ample magazines were redeemed for the service of the Lord.”¹ It was more than this. That crisis of mighty surrender was the hour when the glorious union we are to ponder in this Volume was consummated;—when “IN CHRIST” rang first in his ear “the melodies of its everlasting chime.” The reality is best described in words which will demand special consideration in subsequent pages. “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ; and be found IN HIM” (Phil. iii. 7-9).

There was much, doubtless, that made Paul’s experience at that memorable moment distinctive and exceptional. It was not, in his case, as in that of

¹ Blunt.

many, with whom "conversion" implies a sudden and startling transition from a life of vice and sin,—the dispersion of darkness from hearts beclouded for years with the repulsive shadows of gross moral debasement. Nor, on the other hand, was it the rare transformation of a scheming impostor (a whited sepulchre),—one who had lived the life of a pretender,—the moral sense vitiated and depraved by hollow hypocritical semblances. No. He sallied forth on that mission from the northern Gate of Jerusalem,—a valorous champion for what he had long deemed the truth;—the consciousness of honest purpose and religious fervour,—“Love of right and scorn of wrong,”—though in a distorted form, pulsating in his heart. It is only to repeat the best-known facts in Sacred Story—that in addition to brilliant natural gifts and acquired culture, he had, up to that time, been the most rigid of ceremonialists. No Pharisee had tithed his mint and cummin with more exactitude than he. With scrupulous adherence to the letter of Judaism he had abstained from its forbidden meats and drinks, obeyed its required fastings and lustrations, regarded with pride the pomp of its solemn feasts and the pageantry of its time-honoured ritual; revered its often meaningless traditions, and finally imbibed its fanatic intolerance. “I verily thought,” said he, “with myself, that I *ought*” (it was a false sense of stern duty and obligation) “to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts xxvi. 9). And

more than all, he was the possessor of a rare catalogue of virtues, and of so-called 'spiritual attainments.' He could point to a life unstained by impure or ignoble deed—what the world would have called "a splendid righteousness." "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil. iii. 4-6).

And yet, though it may appear at first sight contradictory,—despite of this array of personal and hereditary merit, we might, did our subject demand it, further trace on no mere hypothetical grounds, a course of mental and moral preparation for that culminating event in his history:—the pangs and struggles of a vehement yet intensely earnest nature. Even in his apparently most defiant mood, he felt the ground he was resolutely defending to be gradually yielding, like a sinking morass, beneath his feet. May we not well believe there were unsatisfied yearnings of his great, truth-loving soul, for something beyond mechanical ritual—hard formula—fluent shibboleth;—that he was approaching, at least, that point, graphically described by a master-hand in speaking of another:—when "doubt has eaten out the heart of it: a human soul is seen clinging spas-

modically to an Ark of the Covenant which it half feels now to have become a Phantasm."¹ Among other influences acting upon a susceptible spirit like his, the memories and impressions of the first martyr's death could not surely be readily effaced. He could have been no mere passive spectator of that scene in the Hall Gazith: the angel-like countenance:—the prayer of forgiveness:—the gentle '*sleep*.' "The Church," says Augustine, "owes Paul to the prayer of Stephen." And along with the indelible impressions derived from that *death*, lessons of similar power and cogency must have been gathered from the *lives* of Stephen's associates,—the hated disciples of the cross and the Crucified. The radiant face of the Protomartyr was again and again seen by him reflected in the character and conduct of the followers of Jesus. That surely could be no myth which produced such heroic devotion, such unflinching faith, such calm submission, such holy joy:—"a peace"—to use his own subsequent language—"which passeth all understanding."² All honour, nevertheless, to the man (and the more honour just because of these honest scruples) who could thus brace himself to the moral heroism, of

¹ Carlyle's "Heroes and Hero Worship," p. 113.

² See *Neander* in loc: also *Olshausen*, on what he calls "the psychological changes in the mind of Paul." "In his heart there might be a violent struggle, and he might have to fight against the truth forcing itself upon his mind, a state which, though not outwardly apparent, yet internally would prepare the way for the designs of God in reference to him."—Vol. iv. p. 459.

relinquishing the cherished dream and aspiration of toiling years;—who could drill through layer on layer of the superincumbent strata of ancestral pride, and prejudice, and boasted spiritual prerogative, till he reached the sure foundation in the living Rock of Ages.

To enter, however, with any fulness on this and cognate considerations, would divert us from our purpose in this Volume: these topics, moreover, having been amply treated by skilled mental analysts, both in this country and Germany. Enough to say, that despite of a wide diversity of experience alike in antecedent and accompaniment,—that scene on the road to Damascus—(as a “calling out of darkness into marvellous light,”) is, in its main essential feature, re-enacted in the case of each individual who has been “translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son” (Col. i. 13); and who, with the inner eye supernaturally opened and the aching heart-throbs stilled, has risen from the ground to which, in a figurative sense, he has been stricken,—“a man IN CHRIST” (2 Cor. xii. 2).

“Who art Thou, Lord?” is the exclamation of such an arrested one. The imagery unfolded in the apocalyptic vision of a later year (Rev. iii. 20), was that of the same Saviour, “His head filled with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night,”—standing at the deserted door of the human heart,—a door choked with tangled brier and weed and thorn, a melancholy *ruin*. But the divine allegory, in the present and other

repeated references of St. Paul, is reversed. It rather is that of the soul in its rags and wretchedness, imploring admission within the gates of the Great Living Refuge. Nor is the pleading in vain. Instead of spurning the suppliant away, the welcome is given, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou WITHOUT?" From that moment, to change the metaphor, the wounded, weary, fluttering dove, folding its wings, sinks into the clefts of the Rock. From that moment, all the false opiates and anodynes used to quiet the spasms of the spiritual nature, are flung for ever away. The whole being thrills with a new vitality and joy. It is the great EUREKA of Life—"I found Him whom my soul loveth" (Sol. Song iii. 4). From that moment, the key-note of the Gospel is struck and never ceases to vibrate—"God is IN CHRIST, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. v. 19). In a word, a living, vital union is formed between the Believer and his Lord. "To make *in Himself* of twain, one new man, so making *peace*" (Eph. ii. 15).

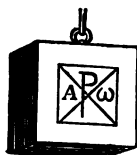
"IN HIM was life," says St. John (i. 4), as in turn he pens his sacred remembrances in distant Ephesus;—catching up the same blessed truth, and appropriating, so to speak, the *monogram* of his "companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ:"—"We are IN HIM that is true, even *in His Son, Jesus Christ*" (1 John v. 20).

"How do I know Thee?" said Augustine; "I do not know Thee as Thou art in Thyself, but as Thou

mental union,—a mere naked theological dogma. St. Paul specially avers (what will be subsequently considered) that believers are “created IN CHRIST JESUS *unto good works*” (Eph. ii. 10).

IN CHRIST, “*a new creation!*” Does that, however, imply present and absolute perfection? In one sense it does. “Ye are complete IN HIM.” Of the believer it is said, “He cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 John iii. 9). Justified once, he is justified for ever; recreated once, he is recreated for ever. But the hidden life, like the seed we have spoken of, which has to struggle through darkness and superincumbent clod up to the pure light of day, is often impeded and interrupted by reason of sin and moral weakness, the infirmity of the flesh, and successful temptation. The outer world is ever and anon swathed in clouds and drenched in rain-torrents,—ribbed here with ice, dislocated there with earthquake and volcanic fire; palled here in darkness, and swept there with tornado and storm. So with the “new creation.” It has “scars upon its brow.” There are warring elements within and around which tell too plainly, that for the ‘ideal life,’ we must look upwards and onwards to “the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. iii. 13). Here “we see,” but it is “through a glass, darkly” (1 Cor. xiii. 12). The full day shall only *then* break, and the shadows flee away (Cant. iv. 6). Too acutely did the Apostle know by experience the reality of the two antagonist natures—

“the law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which was in his members” (Rom. vii. 23): the fightings without and the fears within;—the ‘Hill Difficulty’ encountered in so many parts of the journey. Well did he understand the need of his own hortatory words, “Finally, my brethren, be strong IN THE LORD, and in the power of His might. . . . Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (Eph. vi. 10, 13).



IV.

BABES IN CHRIST.

“Even as unto babes IN CHRIST.”—1 Cor. iii. 1.

THESE words enable us to expand the thought which formed the close of the last meditation;—that the Christian life, though one of progress and development, has its commencement in weakness. “The perfect man in Christ Jesus” was at one time a babe. The spiritual life may be compared to our earth, which is not all at once bathed in noontide splendour. Its mountain tops are first flushed with tender radiance; then their sides and hollows; by and by reaching to the lower valleys; till at last “there is nothing hid from the heat and light thereof.” Paul may have remembered in this respect his own experience, when, spiritually as well as physically, with an infant’s helplessness, he was led through the streets of Damascus. With “the milk belonging to babes” he seems to have been fed during his subsequent withdrawal into the deserts of Arabia, until “the time of his shewing unto Israel” (Gal. i. 17).

It is the normal experience in the believer’s inner

history still. His incipient life is tender, fragile—the pulsations of faith slow and intermittent. That faith is compared to the grain of mustard seed; to the brittle reed; to the bending sapling. Jesus Himself recognises different degrees of faith, and therefore different stages in His people's growth. "I have many things," He says, "to say unto you, but (as babes) ye cannot bear them now" (John xvi. 12). As if He would further add (if we may venture to fill in the *ellipsis*), "The time *will* come when, with matured experience and knowledge, you will be able." He speaks of a "great faith," and of a "little faith;" but He accepts and acknowledges the little as well as the great. They are the same in kind though varying in degree and intensity, for they rest on Himself the One only Foundation. Our Apostle, in double figure, elsewhere alludes to this same progressive character of the Christian life—from weakness to strength, from feebleness to maturity. He conjoins two different metaphors, "Rooted and built up IN HIM" (Col. ii. 7). "Rooted," here is the feeble sapling, struggling for very life in the rifts of the rock; but having its fibres, delicate as they are, embedded there, it is safe. The rock shelters it, the dews and rains of heaven moisten it, the sun and air of heaven nurture and mature it. The second emblem expresses, under another metaphor still, the growth and expansion of faith into vigorous manhood; "*Built up* in Him." It is now no longer a fragile plant *in* the rock; but a spiritual building, rising

stone on stone, tier on tier, upon that same Rock of Ages. Nor is this all. The Giant-Rock itself, so to speak, is incorporated with the living stones. "Built up IN HIM" (Col. ii. 7): or, as he expresses and expands it in a parallel passage—"IN WHOM all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple *in the Lord*" (Eph. ii. 21).

That 'temple in the Lord' attains at last "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13). Or, as Bengel in one of his quaint figures expresses it, "We shall come to be arrayed in the *toga virilis*—the Roman garment of the full-grown man."

God's dealings with those in the earliest stages of the spiritual life, "babes in Christ," are beautifully delineated long anterior to Gospel times. The prophet Hosea (xi. 1), referring in the first instance to the national tribe of Israel, speaks, through the type, of Jehovah's covenant relationship to His spiritual people. He begins with a description of their infancy:—"When Israel was a child, then I loved him." He proceeds to depict the next stage of tottering childhood. God holds him in "leading strings" (ver. 3), "I taught also Ephraim to go." A third experience is when the leading strings are withdrawn. The picture is given of the divine, like the earthly parent, putting out His hands ready to catch the child as he stumbles on at his first attempt to walk—"taking them by their arms" (ver. 3). Then follows yet another stage of advance-

ment, "drawing them with the cords of a *man*" (no longer a child); "with bands of love" (ver. 4).

To the timid and fearful, the desponding and misgiving, there is comfort surely in all this: that if the good work be begun it *will* be fostered to its consummation. We may feel abashed at our own weakness and instability, as compared with the average experiences of God's family. Our love may be cold, our obedience fitful, our faith unworthy of the name. But even if there be no more than the infant's faltering cry (the cry of the "new creature"—the babe in Christ), that cry denotes that the life is there,—*"alive unto God;"* and He that hath breathed into us spiritually the breath of a new being—"He that hath begun the good work will carry it on." The wanderer of the fold may be footsore and weary; the brambles of the thicket still cleaving to its torn fleece. It may be a poor, maimed member of the flock compared to others. But having been brought by the Good Shepherd within, what an old writer calls, "the pasture-ground and covenant-enclosures," it is equally safe and secure with the strongest; and in its tremulousness can rest in the sure promise—"I will make My grace sufficient for thee." Indeed, it is for the tender ones of the spiritual fold the Great Pastor specially cares. While the others are "fed by Him like a shepherd," there is special provision for the weak and feeble;—"He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom" (Isa. xl. 11). The incipient

experience and development, too, of that new-born spiritual life, may and does vary widely in different cases, owing to peculiarity and diversity in intellectual mould, natural disposition, and moral training. To use the words of another—"Its first moment may not indeed be registered in the consciousness, as it may be awakened within us by a varying process, in harmony with the quickness or the slowness of mental perception and the dulness or the delicacy of temperament. The sun rises in our latitude preceded by a long twilight, which gradually brightens into the radiance of morning; but within the tropics he ascends at once above the horizon with sudden and exuberant glory."¹ It is a comfort, moreover, that, *as babes*, He will not expect more from us in the shape of service than we can give Him. He accepts a babe's offering. He accepts our feeblest:—even the fervid thought, and sincere earnest purpose which cannot be translated into action, "Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for My Name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart" (2 Chron. vi. 8).

Oh, ye lisping babes, trust the Parent's loving arm, and loving ways, and loving discipline! Oh, ye "Little Faiths" and "Ready-to-halts," like Gideon faint, yet "still pursue." It is one of the well-known spiritual aphorisms of a saintly and sainted writer, "The weakest faith that ever laid hold of a strong Saviour has eternal

¹ Dr. Eadie on Ephesians, p. 134.

life." The characteristic of a babe or a child in infancy is absolute helplessness—dependence—trust,—absence of disquietude—ignorance of the future, utter oblivion to care, and misgiving, and foreboding. It reposes on its mother's breast, or is sung to sleep in its cradle with the mother's lullaby. Picture of the babe—the new creature in Christ Jesus, reposing in its Heavenly Father's arms, and kept in perfect peace, cradled in the Saviour's love. If you are conscious of a babe's weakness, seek to cherish and manifest a babe's simple dependence—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

It is well to remember in connection with these reflections, how marvellously that very faith that was rebuked as a "little faith" grew to be a strong one. Trace the story of Peter's after-life, as recorded in the Acts. He seems almost to have lost his personal identity. We fail to recognise the same rash, impulsive spirit he once was. The harsh music of his nature is toned down, every discordant note subdued into harmony. "And such also," may it not be averred, "were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi. 11).



V.

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN CHRIST.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places IN CHRIST."—Eph. i. 3.

IN no other portion of St. Paul's writings do his favourite words occur more frequently than in the glowing utterances of the "Great Encyclical"—that 'circular letter' which, we have good reason to believe, was not intended exclusively for the Church of Ephesus, but for "the saints" (at all events in three other cities of proconsular Asia—Colosse, Hierapolis, and Laodicea), who had never "seen his face in the flesh" (Col. ii. 1), or listened to his burning words. From the frequent allusions, indeed, contained in it to Him who was emphatically his "Beloved," it has been well called "the Song of Songs" of the New Testament Scriptures.¹

See, in this one chapter alone, from which our

¹ The question for whom the (so called) Epistle to the Ephesians was intended, is discussed in "Howson and Conybeare," vol. ii. pp. 405-410. The theory of the "circular letter" now accepted by a majority of the best critics, originated with Archbishop Usher.

motto-text is taken, how the Apostle loves, for himself and others, to be served heir "IN CHRIST" to "all spiritual blessings" (ver. 3). Is it the opening dedication? (ver. 1)—he speaks of believers as "the faithful *in Christ Jesus*." Does he impart in the same sentence the apostolic benediction? The grace and peace invoked, are "from God the Father" conjoined with "*the Lord Jesus Christ*" (ver. 2). Does he speak of their election? (ver. 4.) They are "chosen *in Him* before the foundation of the world." Does he speak of their adoption? (ver. 5.) It is the adoption of children "*by Jesus Christ* to Himself." Is it their justification and acceptance in the sight of God? (ver. 6.) "He hath made us accepted *in the Beloved*." Is it the free gift of redemption and forgiveness? (ver. 7.) "*In whom* we have redemption through His blood." Does he advert to the grandeur of the future dispensation? (ver. 10.) It is that "He might gather together in one all things *in Christ*." Is it the purchase of the eternal heritage of the saints? (ver. 11.) "*In whom* also we have obtained an inheritance." Is it the sealing of the Holy Ghost? (ver. 13.) "*In whom*" (i.e., *in Christ*) "ye are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Does he speak of the revelation of "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints?" (ver. 18.) It is "according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought IN CHRIST" (vers. 19, 20).

We see thus, in glancing over the contents of one chapter, independent of those which follow, how the

Apostle loved to sit under that same gracious shadow. Hopes, promises, blessings, prayers, the privilege of grace here, and the boundless prospects of glory hereafter, focus and centre in the Person of his adorable Lord. To some of these passages just quoted, we may recur for more special meditation afterwards. Meanwhile, surely it is remarkable to trace, within this brief compass, so many successive and unbroken links in the one golden chain—"CHRIST *all and in all*."

In the verse selected above, we have Jesus brought before us as the great channel for the conveyance of spiritual blessings to the souls of His people. Moreover, a peculiar phrase is employed descriptive of these blessings. They are spoken of, as we noted in a previous meditation, as "*in heavenly places*." The same expression occurs five times in the epistle (i. 3, 20; ii. 6; iii. 10; vi. 12). It is no part of this volume to enter into *exegesis*; but it may be well to observe that, in the original Greek, there is nothing corresponding to the substantive which is added in our own authorised version.¹ Many Commentators, ancient and modern, have considered that there is an *ellipsis*—a word or words which require to be supplied. Hence, some have suggested "*heavenly things*;"² others, as in the English Bible—"places."³

¹ *Ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις.*

² Such as Chrysostom and Theodoret, Luther and Michaelis.

³ This rendering is supported, among others, by Jerome and Bengel, Grotius and Olshausen.

Peculiar, however, as the idiom is, it seems, viewed in the light of the Apostle's *monogram*, to require neither of the additional nouns, and to be better without either; simply retaining the intransferable beauty and energy of the plural original—" *In the heavenlies.*" 'IN CHRIST,' Paul and all believers have reached a higher spiritual sphere. *In Him*, "things in heaven and things in earth" are one; heaven 'brought nigh' IN CHRIST;—heaven within, heaven above, heaven around. His assertion, elsewhere, is the best comment and interpretation on this disputed phrase in the Ephesus letter, "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20); or yet in that other noble description of the Christian's franchise, and his immunities as an inhabitant of the heavenly Zion:—"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. ii. 19). Heaven to the believer consists not in locality, but in the conscious enjoyment of Christ's nearness and love:—"IN WHOM, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and *full of glory* (1 Pet. i. 8). Chrysostom and Luther, in further rendering the two concluding words of our motto-verse, "heavenly places *through Christ*," would to us despoil it of its distinctive meaning and significance. True, doubtless, it is *through Christ*, and through Christ alone, that "the heavenlies" are attained. But is it not more in harmony surely with our Pauline *formula*—the dominat-

ing thought of his creed and life—to retain, as in the original, “heavenly places IN Christ”? It is *in Him* that we live in this “land Beulah.” It is *in Him* we are bathed, so to speak, in the glory of the heavenly atmosphere,—that atmosphere replete and luminous with His presence;—“We walk in the light, as He is in the light” (1 John i. 7).¹

While thus magnifying “the unsearchable riches of *Christ*,” let us at the same time join with the Apostle in tracing all these up to the love of God *the Father*. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

¹ Dr. Eadie, in his scholarly commentary, has the following excellent observations on the phrase to which we have just been making reference. “It does not denote heaven proper, but is the ideal locality of the Church on the earth as ‘the kingdom of heaven’—above the world in its sphere of occupation and employment. . . . ‘The heavenly places’ are IN CHRIST. Union to Him brings us into them. His glory is their bright canopy, and His presence diffuses joy and hope. . . . Our life, resurrection, and enthronement follow one another, as in the actual history of the great Prototype. But this ‘sitting with Jesus’ is as spiritual as the life, and it indicates the calmness and dignity of the new existence. The quickened soul is not merely made aware that *in Christ*, as containing it and all similar souls, it is enlivened, and raised up, and elevated; but, along with this, it enjoys individually a conscious life, resurrection, and session with Jesus. It feels these blessings in itself through its union with Him. It lives, and it is sensible of this life; it has been raised, and it is aware of its change of spiritual position. Nay, it feels itself in the meantime ‘sitting with Jesus,’ not solely because of its relation to Him in His representative character, but because of its own joyous and personal possession of royal elevation, purity, and honour:—‘He hath made us kings’ (Rev. i. 6). What is more peculiar to the spirit in this series of present and beatific gifts shall at length be shared in by the entire humanity. The body shall be quickened, raised, and glorified, and the redeemed man shall, in the fulness of his nature, enjoy the happiness of heaven” (pp. 135, 136).

Christ who hath blessed us." "It hath pleased THE FATHER that IN HIM should all fulness dwell" (Col. i. 19).

THE FATHER! that precious Name and word which specially belongs to the Gospel dispensation. Not the God of a false and a harsh theology, armed alone with the thunderbolt;—some grim Avenger delighting to exact terrible retribution; or else some mythical Phantom existing in cold, unsympathetic, unpitiful isolation; but the Living, personal "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. i. 3, 4). Nay, how near is His paternal character and love brought to us from the region of the abstract and ideal! "My Father, and your Father" (John xx. 17). "All things are yours," says Paul, in that triumphant passage which we may well call the charter of the believer's privileges, "All are yours, . . . and *ye are* CHRIST'S, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 21, 23). The Holy Spirit, moreover, the third Person of the blessed Trinity, is represented, in a subsequent portion of the epistle from which the verse preceding this meditation is taken, as associated with the Father and the Son in covenant for our salvation; "For through Him" (*i.e.*, Christ) "we both have access *by one Spirit* unto the Father" (Eph. ii. 18). God the Father pours the anointing oil of the Holy Ghost on the head

of the true Aaron; and the sacred unguent flows down to the very skirts of His garment. Each of His people are thus made participators and recipients of "abounding grace;" yea, the lowliest and humblest receive the most.

That Father-God IN CHRIST is further revealed, as waiting, and willing, to bless us with "ALL spiritual blessings." He gives us, so to speak, a blank cheque, saying, 'Fill it up as you please; fill it up, not for a *few* things, but for *all* things;—pardon, peace, grace, holiness, strength for daily duty, light for perplexing paths, comfort in sorrow, support and victory in death.' "My God," says the Apostle in another passage we shall come subsequently to consider, (giving glory to the Father; and yet, too, seeming as if he never could mention the Father's love apart from that of the Son and his interest *in* Him); "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 19). It reminds us of the gushing river of Ezekiel's Temple-vision, bordered with trees of unfading leaf and perennial fruit; and regarding which it is said—"Everything lives whither the river cometh." But while it issued out "from under the threshold of the house," it flowed by "the south side of the altar" (of sacrifice)—(Ezek. xlvii. 1). Or, it recalls John's kindred Apocalyptic figuration—strikingly suggestive alike of the Father's love and the Son's sacrificial offering—the "pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the *throne of God*

AND OF THE LAMB " (Rev. xxii. 1). It brings to remembrance a yet diviner word of Truth and Inspiration from the lips of One more infallible than the chiefest and most favoured of prophets and apostles. He who is emphatically "the Christ of God," thus speaks in the Great Prayer preceding the agony—"Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, *that they may be one*, EVEN AS WE ARE ONE (John xvii. 7, 22).



VI.

LIFE IN CHRIST.

"For the law of the spirit of life IN CHRIST JESUS."—Rom. viii. 2.

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God (lit.) IN JESUS CHRIST our Lord."—Rom. vi. 11.

"For the wages of sin is death ; but the gift of God is eternal life through " (or rather, IN) "JESUS CHRIST our Lord"—Rom. vi. 23.

"As in Adam all die, even so IN CHRIST shall all be made alive."—1 Cor. xv. 22.

DEATH and LIFE:—Death by nature,—life by grace ;—dead in sin,—alive unto God ;—death in the first Adam—life in the second Adam ;—this is the reiterated theme of these varied passages.

It is God's plan to bring life out of death. Nature reads it in her yearly parable: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 24. The Apostle recognises, in the believer, a double death ; and in each case there is the new resultant life. He dies to the law : "Now we are delivered," says he, "from the law ; that being dead wherein we

were held" (Rom. vii. 6). He dies also WITH CHRIST: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live" (Gal. ii. 20). While he exclaims in language of no sembled agony, almost in tones of despair, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24); the glorious deliverance rises the same moment to his lips; he has a ready response to his wailing cry;—the *miserere* is answered by the pæan,—“I thank God *through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Rom. vii. 25)—‘He shall deliver me; He *has* delivered me’ (for so may the incomplete utterance be filled in and supplied). Yet again, to repeat one of the motto-verses at the head of this chapter, “The wages of sin is death; but THE gift of God” (the gift of all gifts, like a giant Alp soaring above its surrounding compeers) “is eternal life IN JESUS CHRIST our Lord” (Rom. vi. 23).¹

Nor was this topic, ‘dying,’ yet ‘living in the Lord Jesus,’ a casual theme, associated with any one special period of Paul’s ministry. The golden thread is retained and clung to, to the end. What cheered him in Corinth, when in the fulness of his manhood and apostolic vigour he wrote his Roman Epistle, formed also his sheet-anchor and solace amid the days of darkness and the lengthening shadows. In the last letter he ever wrote, —that addressed to Timothy from his dungeon in the

¹ *In (ἐν)*. See Alford’s remarks both on this verse and verse 11. “*By virtue of our union with Him; not through (διὰ)*. In this chapter it is not Christ’s Mediatorship, but His Headship, which is prominent.”

city of the Cæsars,—when his thoughts, we may well believe, were most matured in Christian doctrine and spiritual things; when, had there been aught of the mystic in his past creed, he would have disowned or cancelled it,—the old parallelism of “death in Christ” and “life in Him,” lingers like a cherished strain in the doomed man’s ears. He holds to it among the few “faithful things” which still survived;—“This is a faithful saying” (one, among unreliable promises, to be wholly relied on), “that if we be dead *with Christ* we shall also live *with Him*” (2 Tim. ii. 11). The Apostle of love, when he also had reached his waning years, rises to the fervour of a kindred utterance: “This is *the* record” (not part of the record, but *THE* record, the sum and quintessence of all His teachings), “that God hath given to us eternal life, and that life is” (not shall be, but a present glorious possession is),—“*IN His Son*” (1 John v. 11).

Thus, what the first Adam lost, not only the second Adam restored, but far more than restored. We know not, regarding the former, whether life would have been contingent on his remaining loyal in his allegiance: or, though successfully resisting the first assault of the tempter and his wiles, whether, by some subsequent failure in obedience, that life would have been forfeited. But there is no such contingency in the life purchased and guaranteed by the Second Adam—the Lord from heaven. Hence, in contrast with the ‘Paradise Lost,’ and the sword of its flaming cherubim, the Great Giver

of this new life could aver, "I came that ye might have life, *and that ye might have it* MORE ABUNDANTLY;"—a life with no possibility of fall or forfeiture. Beautiful is the similar comment which the Divine Restorer—the living, loving Head of the Second Covenant, Himself makes, as He stands amid the weeping throng at Bethany—"He that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall He live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die; believest thou this?" (John xi. 25, 26). We are reminded of words of prophetic song spoken regarding a Mightier than the Psalmist of Israel;—the pleading of Messiah for the Church redeemed with His blood:—"He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever" (Ps. xxi. 4.—Prayer-book version).

Though it must be confessed a subordinate and secondary, there is yet another view of the present theme to which at least the reflected life *in Christ* may be applied, and with which it may not be inappropriate to conclude the present meditation.

The World, as well as the Church, stands a debtor to that Life. "I," says Christ, "am the Light of *the world*." To borrow a lunar illustration. Just as the moon in the heavens (the invariable Scriptural emblem of the Church) not only derives all her light and splendour from the sun, but gives back also that light in a reflected shape to the planet of which she is the satellite:—so with the Church and the reflected beams

of the true Sun of Righteousness. *What would our earth have been but for Christianity?* She may be too proud to make the acknowledgment:—or unconscious of the presence of the Greater light from which she derives the boon. Be it so. She is nevertheless the recipient of His blessings. From that cradle of Bethlehem, that home of Nazareth, that cross of Calvary, that grave of Golgotha, there have gone forth ameliorating, civilising influences, to mankind. Believers are the alone partakers, indeed, of real spiritual light and life, the true radiance of the divine Sun. But *all*, in another sense, have benefited by the brightness of His rising. So that the words of the Psalmist have a far wider than their literal meaning: "In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun; which is as a Bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof" (Ps. xix. 4-6). Nay, more; is it too much to add, that this material earth of ours,—this creation groaning and travailing in pain—has become so far now, and will be to a vaster degree hereafter, a participant in the life-blessings IN CHRIST? Glorifying, above all, in their grander spiritual meaning, St. Paul did not despise or overlook these elevating hopes and prospects, which had become the heritage of the material economy around him, through the death of his great Lord. It was contemplating such, that he could take down his harp from the willows,

and sing of Creation, so long "subject to vanity," being "delivered from the bondage of corruption, and translated into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." Oh yes, smile as many may do at the assumption; a dead and dying world,—the fields around us, the flowers that waft their fragrance on our path—the revolving seasons that gladden us—the verdure of Spring, the radiant glory of Summer, the mellowed stores of Autumn;—in a word, *the earth we tread*, stands debtor to "the law of the Spirit of life IN CHRIST JESUS."



VII.

ONE BODY IN CHRIST.

"We, being many, are one body IN CHRIST."—Rom. xii. 5.



ANY folds, "one flock" (John x. 16):—not, as rendered in our English version, "one fold":¹—many branches, one tree: many stones, one temple: many regiments, one army: many planets, one system: many flowers, one garden: many members, one body.

Such is the true ideal of the Christian Church. The Apostle's illustration or metaphor, in our motto-verse, is from the last of these; the human body, with its different members; each member occupying its appropriate place and fulfilling its appointed function in the system. His object is to inculcate, that, diversity of offices and gifts among Christians, so far from being inconsistent with this union, is necessary to its perfection and usefulness. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you!" (1 Cor. xii. 21). Yet, each and all the members of this spiritual frame-

¹ Greek, *μία ποιμήν*, not *μία αὐλή*.

work are absolutely powerless and effete, but for the divine life that throbs and pulsates through every vein: a corporate union *with the living Head*. It is "one body IN CHRIST." God hath given Him "to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 22, 23).

The same expressive image is perhaps more fully expanded in an afterpart of this same epistle. "The Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (iv. 15, 16). Or yet again, in his Epistle to the Colossians, during the same period of his later life—(showing that the favourite metaphor had taken deep hold of the mind of the writer)—"The Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God" (Col. ii. 19).

To a certain extent, what the Apostle had averred regarding the gifts and graces of individual members, holds true regarding the organization of churches. Multiform in every age have been the projects and aspirations after "Church union;" identity of Church rule and symbolism:—many, if not most of which aspirations, it is to be feared are alike false in theory, and unattainable, if not undesirable, in practice. All honour indeed to every faithful and conscientious attempt to

diminish painful and unworthy antagonisms between sect and sect; and shame on those who, by prating words, do their best to promote or perpetuate schisms which all who love Christ's Name must deplore. At the same time, experience has amply shown the impracticability and worthlessness of any mere external uniformity—that little reliance can be placed on man-made devices to secure such outward unity, the demolition of mere outer lines of distinction. Synodical conferences, Evangelical alliances, and Church congresses, may serve successfully to lop the branches of the Ecclesiastical forest into temporary and artificial sameness; but, as in Nature, they will, sooner or later, resent the attempt at identity,—and assert the free outgrowth of varying shape and form. In truth, the divine idea and ideal seems rather to be an echo of Nature's parable. It seems to discountenance the fusing of principles into one stereotyped, unchanging system. It is "*Many members one body.*" *Co-operation*, without necessarily *incorporation*; *union*, without necessarily *communion*; Zechariah's symbolic Lamp (Zech. iv. 2, 3) "all of gold" fed from the same reservoir,—the oil distilled from the same "two olive-trees;"—but seven-branched:—the noblest and grandest illustration of the oft-quoted aphorism—"unity in diversity, and diversity in unity." One candlestick, but "seven lamps thereon." One flock certainly; but not the absorption of all folds into one. Within limits that were expedient and possible, no one was doubtless a more

thorough lover and advocate of union than the Great Apostle. Note how he speaks of the most marvellous example he himself lived to see consummated, and in the completion of which he was the most honoured instrument. It was that of two elements whose amalgamation seemed so incredible and impossible, that he speaks of it as "THE *mystery*" (Eph. iii. 3):—"That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel." Hear his terse and vivid description of this joint participation of Jew and Gentile in the privileges of the new faith. The words he employs are remarkable: denoting so very prolonged and so very wide a separation; but now brought so very near IN CHRIST. "Co-heirs"—"co-incorporated," "co-partakers." Words, as has been suggested, which appear coined by himself in order to deepen and intensify his meaning.¹ Let them remain, as containing a vivid picture of the true spiritual union he would seek to have realised, at all events among the individual members of Christ's Church, purchased with His blood:—the oneness of all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, 'holding the Head':—"fellow-partakers," as he expresses it (rising to the climax), "of his promise IN CHRIST by the Gospel." "Salute," says he, in words of noble catholicity, "every saint IN CHRIST JESUS" (Phil. iv. 21). For, after all, the grand, and superlatively momentous question is—

¹ The *συν* is thrice repeated, *συνκληρονόμα, σύσσωμα, συμμετοχα*. See Dr. Eadie on Ephesians, pp. 207-209.

not that of Church System, and Church life, and party-colours, but of personal relation to *Him*;—the consciousness of this incorporation which makes us individually participators in the life of God's dear Son. Let us listen, from the Redemption-Song of the Old Testament, to what has been called "the bleat of Messiah's true sheep:" It is a longing after no denominational pasture—no artificial enclosure or fold; but for fellowship with the Great, the Divine Shepherd Himself:—"Tell me, O THOU whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions?" (Sol. Song i. 7). Or, returning to our Apostle, let us listen, under a different metaphor, to the words of this great 'Athlete' as he runs the Christian race. His first concern is 'Am I IN CHRIST?' 'Have I secured *in Him* my high calling?' And then (but not till then) he proclaims, as a sequel to that *individual* experience, what may be called his theory of Church union, and one in its results eminently alike desirable and practicable. The whole passage is worth quoting and pondering: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let *us* therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (Phil. iii. 14, 15, 16). "*I press toward the mark for the*

prize of the high calling of God IN CHRIST JESUS!" All outward and accidental Church life is nothing to this. John lay in his Master's bosom. Peter saw his Master's glory on the Mount. But the humblest Christians who can claim living union and communion with their divine Lord, have, in truth, if not loftier at least surer credentials of their high calling. Judas enjoyed an external Church fellowship and Church privilege which fell to the lot only of a select few. Alas! it was of no avail to him. Whereas, the lowliest martyr of the catacombs who had never seen Christ's face in the flesh, but on the tablet of whose forgotten grave 'IN CHRISTO' could be inscribed by loving faithful hands, was a true member of "the Holy Church throughout all the world."

Thanks be to God, there is a glorious inner, real unity dominating all artificial barriers: a sect-mark not of man's device: God's own unmistakable symbolism of holiness of character. There is a golden chain of true Apostolic succession, linking, in indissoluble bonds, men of every varying age and varying ecclesiastical party, who own the distinguishing badge of one of Paul's most loved companions—"Tychicus, a faithful minister *in the Lord*:"—Puritanism and Anglicanism, Priest and Presbyterian, Prelacy and Dissent; names, and times, and schools, as diverse as those of Ambrose and Augustine, Pascal and Fenelon, Luther and Calvin, Martyn and Pattison, Knox and Chalmers. They are worshippers in a great invisible and indi-

visible Temple, with this as its superscription—"One body IN CHRIST." "YE ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS." Party and conventional distinctions disappear before the words of the Master—"All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them" (John xvii. 10). Well has the object and divine mission of the true Church of God on earth been defined—"to destroy evil, and to assimilate Humanity to God: to penetrate and purify the world, and as salt, preserve it from corruption. It has an existence continuous throughout the ages; continuous however, not on the principles of hereditary succession or of human election, as in an ordinary corporation, but on the principle of spiritual similarity of character (1 John i. 3). The Apostle Paul asserted this spiritual succession when he said that the seed of Abraham were to be reckoned, not as his lineal descendants, but as inheritors of his faith. And Christ, too, meant the same, when He told the Jews that out of the stones before Him God could raise up children unto Abraham."¹

How striking is the same Apostle's address, contained in the opening words of his earliest inspired Epistle:—"Unto the Church of the Thessalonians which is . . . 'in the Lord Jesus Christ'" (ver. 1). Then mark his introductory salutation. How perfect a definition of the House of God below—a body of true

¹ Rev. F. W. Robertson on Corinthians, pp. 16, 17.

believers :—" Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, in the sight of God and our Father " (1 Thess. i. 3). Here we have, not the poor unity of opinion, or formula, or ritual, but of hope, and affection, and common interest. " It is between Christ and His Church," says old Thomas Brooks, " as between two lute strings ; no sooner is one struck than the other trembles." There is a mutual glow and thrill of sympathy between heart and heart :—" And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular " (1 Cor. xii. 26, 27). " For ye are all the children of God by faith IN CHRIST JESUS. For as many of you as have been baptized *into Christ* have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female : for ye are all one IN CHRIST JESUS " (Gal. iii. 26-28).

The day at least is coming, when the impossibility of the Church militant will become the certainty and triumph of the Church triumphant—" complete IN HIM." In the words of a deceased scholar, as devout as he was learned—" Under Jesus, as universal Regent, harmony will be restored to the universe. The anthem to God and the Lamb begins with saints, is taken up by angels, and re-echoed by the wide creation " (Rev. v. 9-14). Then indeed will the Apostle's ardent

longings regarding true brotherhood be gloriously and literally realised :—"That we may present every one perfect IN CHRIST JESUS" (Col. i. 28). Then will the ideal of a Greater than Paul be reached : for the prayer of the Divine Intercessor Himself will be fulfilled—"That they all may be one ; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be *one* IN US" (John xvii. 21).

IN HOC VINCES



VIII.

NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are IN CHRIST JESUS."—Rom. viii. 1.

THESE are the opening words of the choicest chapter in St. Paul's great Epistle,—“the Evangel within an evangel:” that Epistle which Luther graphically calls “the Lord's lantern, illuminating all the pages of Holy Writ.” “Thanks be to God,” adds the German theologian who quotes the saying, “for this truest bulwark of the Gospel, this most fragrant flower of his evangelical labour, a very amaranth, unfading, immortal.”¹

In our motto-verse, we have the brief but expressive deduction from the whole previous discussion. The Inspired Writer has reached a transition point in his argument; and “no condemnation IN CHRIST,” is the golden key by which (if I may so express it) he locks up one compartment of his treasure-house, while, with the same golden key he opens the other,

¹ Besser.

with its equally rich and precious contents of Christian doctrine and precept, privilege and promise.

By an irresistible chain of reasoning, he had demonstrated the utter insufficiency of the law to effect the justification of the sinner in the sight of God. The sinner is sisted at the bar; and after proving and substantiating (to use a legal phrase) the various counts of the indictment, all is summed up in the final deliverance—"therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (Rom. iii. 20). Then he had proceeded to make a revelation of God's own method of recovery, alike from the guilt and the dominion of sin, in the work of the adorable Surety,—emphatically "THE power of God unto salvation." By this method the penal consequences of transgression are done away, and the Holy One becomes "the Just, and yet the Justifier." See, in the course of the Apostle's statement, how unconsciously the favourite *monogram* occurs:—"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is IN CHRIST JESUS" (Rom. iii. 21-24). The great evangelical *Prophet* seemed, centuries before, to anticipate the formula as well as the creed of the Great evangelical *Apostle*: "IN

THE LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified " (Isa. xlv. 25).

Not when he wrote this letter to his Roman converts, but in a future year of his chequered life, spent in their city, would St. Paul be fully cognisant of that word of terrible significance—'CONDEMNO,' as it rang its death-knell, through the pillared hall of Cæsar's judgment-seat on the Palatine. But he knew now, and it was his support and solace in these dark hours, the more glorious spiritual meaning of the magnificent converse—"NON CONDEMNO." It is God's own blessed *absolvitur*; the judicial sentence of high heaven—by which the prisoner is dismissed from the bar with the verdict of '*not guilty*' on his head; and which enables him to silence the charge and challenge of every other accuser. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. viii. 33, 34.)

In a verse immediately following, the Apostle seems to rehearse and epitomise the long train of reasoning which had occupied the preceding context. In a few terse and salient words, we have the grounds upon which that verdict of 'no condemnation *in Christ*' is pronounced. I shall avail myself, so far at least, of the paraphrase-rendering of one, whose name, in the last generation, was in all the churches, and who has thrown, beyond other Commentators I know, a flood of light on the great Roman Epistle: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh"

(frail, fallen, humanity—the unrenewed nature—in-capable of meeting its requirements), “God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and *for* sin” (paying sin’s penalty and wages—the curse of a broken law), “condemned” (or *punished*) “sin in the flesh:”—(in the flesh, *i.e.*, in the human nature of Christ), “that the righteousness of the law might” (through Him) “be fulfilled in us” (Rom. viii. 3).¹

The righteousness of that law *must* be “fulfilled;” its requirements must be met, and its sanctities upheld, either in the person of the sinner or of his divine Surety. There was a great typical truth surely uttered, as we see the law’s stony tables sacredly enclosed and guarded within the ancient ‘Ark of the testimony,’ alike in Jewish tabernacle and Temple. We know, moreover, that between that enclosure and the officiating high-priest, with equally significant meaning, there intervened the golden lid called “THE PROPITIATORY.” The true antitype of the latter, the Golden Shield of His Church and people, comes between the unabrogated demands of the law and the sinner standing before the Mercy-Seat—“The redemption,” says the Apostle, “that is IN CHRIST JESUS: Whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation through faith in His blood” (Rom. iii. 24, 25). There is ‘no condemnation,’ because, *in Him*, that inviolate and inviolable law has been kept; its honour vindicated;

¹ See Haldane on the Romans, *in loc.*

its penalties borne; its precepts obeyed. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13). By His voluntary substitution and suretyship He has once and for ever solved the momentous problem—settled the awful alternative, "*condemn*" or "*not condemn*." "God sent NOT His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John iii. 17). That world was a doomed and death-stricken camp. But He, the true Aaron, has "stood between the living and the dead, and the plague is stayed" (Num. xvi. 48).

"*No condemnation* IN CHRIST." Yes, and side by side with that negative statement is the glorious positive and counterpart truth "Accepted *IN the Beloved*" (Eph. i. 6). "Ye are all the children of God by faith *in Christ Jesus*" (Gal. iii. 26). In the garment of the true Elder Brother the seed of Jacob received the Father's blessing. "Oh, the unspeakable greatness of the exchange!" exclaimed one of the venerated brotherhood in Reformation times—"the sinless One is condemned, and he that is guilty goes free: the Blessing bears the curse, and the cursed is brought into blessing. The Living dies, and the dead live; and he that knows nothing but confusion of face is clothed with glory." What else can afford absolute peace, comfort, and security but this? What else can rock the waves of the soul to rest but the voice of Him, who, at the fourth watch of the night, when the darkness of

despair is deepest, comes "walking on the sea," saying, "Fear not, it is I: be not afraid!" "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24).

Nor can any other utter the great absolution. Creation cannot do so. Though in her temple also doth every one, and every thing, speak of His glory; from stream and rivulet murmuring their matin and evensong, and flowers ringing their jubilant bells or wafting from their censers fumes of incense, up to the stars in the nightly firmament, like white-robed Levites ministering in the illimitable fane. Yet there is one "glory," for the proclamation of which these have "no speech nor language, their voice is not heard." Every priestess in Nature's Delphic oracle is dumb. No response has ever been given, or can be given, to the urgent quest of aching humanity—"How is God to deal with my sinful soul?" Here are unsounded and unsoundable depths. "There is nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." God may have left, and has left His own tool-marks and hieroglyphics on the everlasting hills, to testify to His power and Godhead, His wisdom and might. But on their stupendous brows is carved too the confession—"Thus far shalt thou go and no farther."

We turn from these, with assured confidence, to that which is graven as with an iron pen and lead on the

true Rock for ever. "But now IN CHRIST JESUS ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. ii. 13). "What," says Bishop Hall, "is the best grounds of a philosopher's constancy, but as moving sands in comparison of the Rock that we may build upon!" Once upon the Rock of Ages, 'condemnation' there cannot be. Every believer may echo, in lowly triumph, the Apostle's challenge (to which we shall afterwards more particularly refer),—as he closes this sublime chapter—"Who shall separate?" Not life; not death; not angels, nor principalities, nor powers; not things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature. The eternal Rock must perish, before one trembling soul which has fled thither for refuge. Immutability must become mutable, and God Himself cease to be God, before one jewel can be plucked from the diadem purchased by the Prince of life!

Let us increasingly exult in this glorious *manifesto* of the Apostle; alike the foundation-truth and top-stone of the gospel. Not the gospel of moral duties: not the attractive and beautiful evangel of charity and love. These are indeed each to be commended, and to have their rightful place assigned and vindicated in "the proportion of faith." Assuredly he who wrote the 12th of Romans and the 13th of 1st Corinthians, would be the last to eliminate their teachings from his creed. But they are only the superstructure which he rears on a nobler basis. They are subsidiary, and at

pains is he to tell us so. Let us listen to one such earnest protest from his own lips, coupled with the leading tenet in his religious system to which he subordinates all others: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, . . . *how that Christ died FOR OUR SINS according to the Scriptures*" (1 Cor. xv. 1-3). We recently perused the closing words of one, who will not be suspected of narrowness in his theology: "All bridges," said Bunsen, when he himself was crossing over the river of death, "all bridges that one builds through life fail at such a time as this, and nothing remains but the Bridge of the Saviour." "The only plank," says another gifted mind of an opposite school of thought, "between the believer and destruction, is the blood of the Incarnate God."



IX.

HELPERS IN CHRIST.

"Salute Urbane, our helper IN CHRIST."—Rom. xvi. 9.

"Greet Aquila and Priscilla, my helpers IN CHRIST JESUS."—Rom. xvi. 3.

WE have made frequent reference, in previous pages, to the inscription (the name of this Volume) found, often rudely carved, in the Catacombs;—a touching and significant epitaph!

In the 16th chapter of Romans, from which our motto-verses are taken, we may be said to walk among monuments: not monuments of the departed, but of the living friends, companions, contemporaries of the Great Apostle. And it is remarkable the frequency with which the same familiar formula or inscription greets us. IN CHRISTO, is thus beautifully associated alike with "the quick and the dead."

Phœbe, the deaconess of the church at Cenchrea (the port of Corinth, on the Saronic gulph of the Ægean), was either the bearer of the letter, or else sent at the same time on some confidential mission to the Roman Christians. She carried with her Paul's commenda-

tion : "Receive her *in the Lord*" (vers. 1, 2). Aquila and Priscilla—with whom he had hallowed associations, alike in Corinth and at Ephesus, but whose house in Rome seems now to have been a rendezvous for the Christian converts in that city—are greeted, as they well might be, with pre-eminent warmth and affection ; specially so, owing to the imminent peril they had encountered in rescuing the Apostle from the mob by which he had been assailed in the city of Diana, "my helpers *in Christ Jesus*" (vers. 3, 4).¹

His two kinsmen, Andronicus and Junia, names of note, too, in the little brotherhood of the Roman saints, and who, at one time or other, unspecified, had shared his experience of captivity (doubtless one of the "prisons frequent" referred to in 2 Cor. xi. 23), are saluted, not only as "*in Christ*," but with the remarkable distinctive epithet of elder-born saints—"which were *IN CHRIST before me*" (ver. 7). This may refer, not only to the honour and privilege of priority in conversion,² but possibly, too, may contain grateful

¹ "It seems to have been the practice of Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor. xvi. 10) and some other Christians (Col. iv. 15), to hold assemblies for worship in their houses, which were saluted ; and in return sent salutations as '*ONE BODY in the Lord*.'" See Alford's Greek Test. *in loc.*, with interesting reference to Justin Martyr's experience.

² "The earlier the new birth, the weightier will be the glory in the kingdom of God. Young ones regenerated shall have their brows set with more jewels. They shall have an abundant entrance. The more violent the storms they encounter, the greater will be their glory. If there be any sorrow in heaven, it is because they were not sooner born that they might have glorified God more on earth, who bestowed such honour upon them in heaven."—*Charnock*.

allusion to what, as members of the early Church in Jerusalem, they had been and done to Paul himself before his great change. May we not gather from this indirect evidence, that when yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, the prayers of these relatives may have had their own potent share in the demolition of that fortress of bigotry and unbelief, and in reclaiming its treasures for the service of the Christ so long resisted?

Amplias, a contraction of Ampliatus, an unknown private Christian, but whose name suggested some specially sacred memory of a personal character, is hailed "my beloved *in the Lord*" (ver. 8). Urbane (or Urbanus) is identified with some wider and more general service to the faithful; for he is saluted as "our fellow-helper *IN CHRIST*"¹ (ver. 9). Apelles, probably a Jewish convert, but otherwise all unknown, has the favoured designation "'approved'"² *IN CHRIST* (ver. 10). The converted members (some of them possibly the slaves) of the household of Narcissus, supposed to be a Roman patrician, are saluted *IN THE LORD* (ver. 11).³

¹ These two names have been found, among many others, in inscriptions on sepulchral monuments connected with the imperial household. "On an inscription A.D. 115, Urbanus and Ampliatus occur next to each other in a list of imperial freedmen connected with the mint." (See Lightfoot on Phil., p. 174.)

² "Approved, by trial."—*Alford*.

³ There is an inscription extant which is supposed to refer to one of St. Paul's "household": TI. CLAUDIO. SP. F. NARCISSIANO (Lightfoot on Phil., p. 175).

Tryphena and Tryphosa, probably two sister deaconesses still engaged in Christian work, are hailed as labouring "*in the Lord*"¹ (ver. 12), while the past unremitting and singular services of "the beloved Persis" (for she *had* "laboured much *in the Lord*,") are correspondingly acknowledged (ver. 12). Rufus, probably the son of Simon the Cyrenian, the cross-bearer of the gospels (Mark xv. 21, Luke xxiii. 26), is saluted as "elect *in the Lord*" (ver. 13), while his mother, with a beautiful and tender touch of courteous gratitude for kindnesses received at her hand, is figuratively saluted, also IN CHRIST, as "his mother and mine" (ver. 13). "One whom his mother comforteth!" (Isa. lxi. 13).

When the Apostle has finished the dictation of his letter, concluding with this enumeration of greetings we have just glanced at, Tertius, the amanuensis (probably himself a Roman, though now at Corinth) takes up the stylus on his own account; and even he significantly adopts the well-known words in the singular person—"I, Tertius, who wrote this Epistle, salute you *in the Lord*" (ver. 22).

It cannot escape the observation of the reader, how it was that St. Paul, who at the time of writing this Epistle had never personally visited Rome, could have been able to include so many names in his salutations. It is to be noted, first of all, that several of the names

¹ Both these names are seen in Columbaria ("dove-cotes"), found at or near the Appian Way.

are in Greek ; probably a number of those whom he had converted to the faith of Christ in Corinth or Ephesus, and who had left their native cities to settle in the great Metropolis for commercial purposes. It has moreover been suggested, among other explanations, that some of these may have been among "the strangers of Rome" spoken of in Acts, who were in the habit periodically of visiting Jerusalem at Pentecost, and whom Paul may have either met there, or in the course of their journey thither. (*See Howson and Conybeare*, p. 158). The occurrence of the names of Aquila and Priscilla may be accounted for thus ;—that they most probably had returned to Rome when the decree of Claudius for the expulsion of the Jews from the city had been repealed.

These salutations, contained in one chapter of one Epistle, are only in harmony with other kindred messages of the same Apostle at other times. As he writes to the Corinthians from Philippi, sending the letter by the hands of Timothy, what are the best credentials he can give of this youthful servant of the Church ? "I have sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful *in the Lord*, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be IN CHRIST" (1 Cor. iv. 17). At the close of the same, he again couples with his own greeting the names of the faithful Aquila and Priscilla. In their case the salutation is one of special emphasis: "Aquila and Priscilla salute you much IN THE LORD, with the church that is in their

house" (1 Cor. xvi. 19). Take the concluding chapter of his Epistle to his favourite converts,—those who had cost him least anxiety, and had filled him with greatest comfort and consolation. Within the first four verses his monogram is three times mingled with loving exhortations: "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast *in the Lord*, my dearly beloved, I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind *in the Lord*. And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the Gospel, with Clement also, and other my fellow-labourers, whose names are written in the book of life. Rejoice *in the Lord* alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. iv. 1-4). Does he speak of the self-sacrificing mission of Epaphroditus, and all the efforts of that cherished companion and fellow-labourer and soldier in ministering to his wants? He adjures them that on his return to their midst from a perilous mission, they "receive him with all gladness *in the Lord*" (ii. 25, 29). While in the closing sentence, when he would embrace them in one comprehensive greeting, it is still in the old stereotyped phrase, so natural to his thoughts, "Salute every saint *in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. iv. 21). It is the same, whether it be a message to an ordained Pastor, "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received *in the Lord*" (Col. iv. 17): or an appeal to what we would designate a layman, as in the incomparable Epistle to Philemon (that specimen of Christian cour-

tesy, which gives, more than all else the Apostle has written, a glimpse of his affectionate heart). Hear his wonted expression, as he warmly commends the runaway slave to the consideration and generous forgiveness of a gracious Master (ver. 16), "Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and *in the Lord*;"—closing with the loving personal challenge to one who had won so large a place in his Christian esteem—"Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee *in the Lord*" (ver. 20).

What do these salutations of this heroic man, with their peculiar and almost invariable adjunct, suggest? Salutations to those so diverse in age and rank and occupation, from the slave of the household to the head of the family; from the humble deaconess to the laborious pastor and teacher?—Is it not the value he placed alike on loving sympathy, and active co-operation? How different it would have been to him had he been left in lonely isolation, to encounter the good fight single-handed; instead of being able, as he is, to pour his warm benedictions on his "helpers in Christ!" It was in later years, with a doleful heart-break, he uttered the wail from his lonely, unbefriended cell—"All men forsook me" (2 Tim. iv. 16). True, on that very account, he clung with all the fonder reverence and trust to THE ONE who would never forsake;—"Notwithstanding the LORD stood with me, and strengthened me" (2 Tim. iv. 17). But who can read the whole

touching story of Paul's life, from the day already spoken of, when led a blinded traveller in the Syrian city, till the hour when "ready to be offered, and the time of his departure was at hand,"—but must see how sensitively he clung to the support of Christian friends; friendships and fellowships prized and valued, we believe, mainly through realizing the mystical union with a living Lord? What he said of one devoted adherent, 'faithful among the faithless,' he felt, and desired, and prayed for all;—"The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain" (2 Tim. i. 16). See with what imploring and anxious importunity, again and again, he beseeches his dearest son in the faith to hasten across the intervening ocean and gladden the last hours of his waning life with his presence and words! (2 Tim. iv. 21).

Happy are they who, in life's retrospect, can claim such fellowships:—in some cases, possibly, golden friendships, whose memory now is all that remains; but recalling those who, at the time, were like the ministering spirits in Jacob's night-dream—

"Angels to beckon me,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!"—

those inciting either to noble deeds, or, more generally, directing to modest pathways of usefulness; giving the strong arm to some faithful or tardy runner in the

race; evoking slumbering sympathies; chafing the benumbed hand, kindling the smouldering heart-fires and hearth-fires, infusing the glow of a new and better life. Above all, those whose lives have been the true pulpit and sermon of the age; who, by consistent character, simple faith, patient endurance, unselfish generosity, have glorified God and taught and stimulated others to glorify Him; thus earning for themselves, though they knew it not, a title to that noblest designation, "helpers IN CHRIST JESUS;" exercising in some cases, and perhaps unconsciously, a wider influence, and like Phœbe, the humble Cenchrean deaconess, becoming "a succourer of many" (Rom. xvi. 1, 2).

Nor is "the helper in Christ Jesus" the monopoly of any Church, or Church system, or Church teaching. This list in the 16th of Romans is emphatically a list of *laymen*; private members of the Roman brotherhood. Paul, with his breadth and catholicity of soul, would have been the first to repudiate and condemn any arrogated prerogative of churchly caste, or of Christian work. There is a niche in the Temple,—a vocation in the sacred courts for all. There is room for 'the hewer of wood, and the drawer of water,' as well as for the ministering Levite. When will the Churches of Christ, in these modern days, be taught to make religious worship and religious life not all passive and receptive? Their members will only rise to the dignity of their chartered privileges as "Priests unto God" (Rev. i 6), when they recognise the duty of

co-operation and sympathy,—of active and willing service. The command laid upon each by the Great Bishop of souls is—"Go, *work* in My vineyard!" Go; and be thou like one of the brethren or sisters in the Apostolic age, "*a helper* IN CHRIST."



X.

HOPE BEYOND IN CHRIST.

"If in this life only we have hope IN CHRIST, we are of all men most miserable."—1 Cor. xv. 19.

"IN CHRIST shall all be made alive."—1 Cor. xv. 22.

WE have already remarked that Paul was no morbid Christian; but doubtless he had his experience of those times of depression to which God's people, yes, *all* God's servants, are more or less subject, from Elijah in his cave and the Baptist in his prison, to Luther in his forest-castle and Bunyan in his Bedford cell.

It may have been in one of these seasons he was led to pen the sentence in the first of our motto-verses. But, in truth, we need assign it to no special occasion. Such plaintive utterance sounds only natural in the lips of one whose habitual dwelling was in "the tents of Kedar;" who could tell, day by day, of a continuous "fight of afflictions." It is with no irreverence that we may apply to him the name of the Great Master, in whose footsteps he so faithfully trod,—"a man of sorrows." It would have been a traversing

of truth therefore,—alien to his whole nature,—had he (regarding what may be called the outer accidents of existence) made the unnatural avowal, that life was with him full of gladness and joy. Such varied tribulations as fell to his lot take music and ripple out of the best and noblest hearts. Either he, or some other kindred spirit, elsewhere asserts the familiar saying—"Chastisement is *not* joyous but *grievous*" (Heb. xii. 11). We cannot indeed for a moment think that a mind like his could be insensible to the beauties and glories of the fair world around him. One who could so discourse, as we find him doing to the Lystrians (Acts xiv. 15-17), of "the living God, who made heaven, and earth, and the sea;" and to the Athenians (Acts xvii.), of Him "who made the world and all things therein," yet dwelling in a greater than "Temple made with hands;"—could not be indifferent either to the grandeur of outer nature or the refinements of art. The Jewish Rabbis credit his great teacher Gamaliel with a love of the beautiful; which he could hardly fail to instil into the susceptible soul of his pupil. In the opening chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle confronts paganism with the great Volume of nature; and from the entries in her magnificent pages—"the invisible things of God"—he leaves those without excuse, who are blinded to the Eternal power and Godhead of the Almighty Framer (Rom. i. 19-21). In the finest chapter of that same epistle, while he mourns the present degra-

dation, he anticipates with fond hope the ultimate restoration of this fair earth—a second Genesis:—when its present ashen robes of sorrow shall be exchanged for festive attire:—when “the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. viii. 21). Yet it must be allowed, too, that the attraction and fascination which the outer world would otherwise have exercised over his emotional nature, must have been materially diminished by what an interesting writer calls “the great tragedy of the creation’s present existence of woe”—“subject to vanity”—“the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”¹ Though he could not fail to have many and cherished memories of the circlet of oleander and vine-clad hills with their lofty summits, which hemmed in his native Tarsus: though he had been witness more than once, as the travelling missionary, to the savage grandeur of the Pisidian mountains: though he had stood on the Athenian Areopagus, and gazed on the unrivalled panorama whose nearest summit man had crowned with the noblest effort of

¹ See the whole remarks in Besser *in loco*. The same adds the observation, pertinent to our theme—“He (Paul) heard heaven and earth tell of something else than do poets and natural philosophers when they listen to ‘the tales of the wood.’ . . . The holy prophets led him to view nature, after their light had dawned on him in the person of Christ. He now understood the 8th Psalm, because he knew man as the fallen, but, *in Christ*, restored Lord ‘over the works of God’s hands.’”

genius: though he had again and again threaded his way through the Archipelago, and watched those golden sunsets over the Great Sea which all who have seen them can never forget: though he had gazed on the cluster of stone pines which crowned the Acro-Corinthus, and made them, along with the groves of palm and olive, to be suggestive of nobler verities: though he had seen oftentimes Jerusalem in her waning splendour, with her coronal of everlasting hills; though the Valley of Shechem, the gorges of Hermon, the gardens of Damascus, the oaks of Bashan, "the cedars of God," had one after another been unfolded to his eye; still the attractions of these, and a hundred other similar scenes, seemed to have been rendered invisible, if we may so express it, through the blurred and cobwebbed windows of a tried soul like his. With a very special emphasis could he write—"We look not at the things which are *seen*, but at the things which are *not seen*" (2 Cor. iv. 18). HE could be expected to have little heart or inclination to linger over the sublime or beautiful, whose reiterated experiences are thus recorded in the pages of his chequered diary—"I die daily." "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all

things unto this day" (1 Cor. iv. 11-13). "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one, Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Cor. xi. 23-27). We may well imagine him truly feeling and saying, 'If this be "the be-all, and the end-all here," is life worth living?' If only in this world he had hope in Christ; if in his case the Valley of Achor opened to no better land of promise, it would have been a mockery and abuse of language to arrogate for himself the title of 'happy.' "Miserable" would have been the honest verdict.

From another standpoint, however, this wail of our motto-verse may be regarded as exceptional in the case of Paul. 'Hope *in Christ*,' even if it were possible to take a restricted view of it, as bounded by this world, has an accompanying and peerless blessedness. The Christian has been described as having the monopoly of true pleasure. In one sense it is so: "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that

their corn and their wine increased" (Ps. iv. 7). The possessor of a good conscience: emancipated from the misery of evil-doing—the hell of a heart seething with foul corruption—a life at enmity with God, at variance with goodness and purity and peace. Accordingly, even allowing for a moment the monstrous supposition that Christianity is a fable, 'a baseless fabric of a vision;'—heaven, a myth;—death, an eternal sleep;—the whole 'life in Christ' we have been speaking of, a lie and a delusion;—nevertheless, those who are loving and self-denying;—souls ruled and regulated by lofty principle and noble aims, cannot fail to be envied and happy. True religion, consisting in loyal allegiance to God and the dictates of conscience, confers the bliss of a present foretasted heaven, altogether independent of 'the life to come.' So that, with no great straining of experience, the Apostle's language may be reversed,—“Even if in this life *only* we have hope *in Christ*, we are NOT of all men the most miserable.” Although, we allow, it is a poor, hypothetical argument at the best, yet, hear the testimony from lips too sadly qualified to give it:—“Indisputably,” is the tribute paid by one of the most illustrious children of genius in a letter which has recently seen the light,—“Indisputably, the firm believers in the gospel have a great advantage over all others, for this simple reason, that, if true, they have their reward hereafter; and if there be no hereafter, they can be but with the infidel in his eternal sleep, having had the assistance of an

exalted hope through life, without subsequent disappointment." ¹

Such considerations, however, we repeat, are only unworthy negative views to take. But passing to the affirmative: How is all that present 'peace and joy in believing' augmented and intensified, when linked with the assured blessedness in reversion? according to the beautiful saying of Coleridge, "Death only supplying the oil for the inextinguishable lamp of life;"—"the hope full of immortality:"—"the hope laid up for us in heaven:"—"absent from the body, present with the Lord":—"Christ in you" (and you in Christ), "the hope of glory"?—"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 17). Not the 'peradventure' of some blissful future;—not what may after all turn out only to be the desert mirage, with the mimic gleaming of waters and waving of phantom-trees,—a beautiful illusion. But a glorious, unmistakable, transcendent verity: the pure river of the celestial city, 'clear as crystal,' and the assured confidence of banqueting for ever on the fruit of the perennial Tree in the midst of the Paradise of God! A union for the affianced Bride of Christ, not like the unions of earth which death sooner or later severs; but 'everlasting espousals':—"With gladness and rejoicing she shall be

¹ Lord Byron, 1821.

brought; she shall enter into the King's Palace" and the King's presence, wearing on her person her costly jewels, the Royal dowry of "glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life!"

We are let into the secret and explanation of Paul's "Paradise" even in this lower world (and which made him though "sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing"), by what he says to his Philippian converts, and which will afterwards demand special consideration, "Rejoice IN THE LORD alway; and again I say, Rejoice . . . THE LORD is at hand" (Phil. iv. 4, 5). Or, better still, by listening to the words of his Divine Master in His great Valedictory: "And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John xvi. 22). He, the Forerunner, has already entered to take possession of the kingdom, in the name and in behalf of His redeemed people—"Where I am, there shall also My servants be." As the first sheaf was taken into the Temple, and waved before the Lord as a pledge of the harvest to follow; so has the Risen Jesus been presented to the Father in the heavenly sanctuary, the pledge and earnest of a multitude which no man can number; "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. . . . Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor. xv. 20, 23).

No wonder that the believers of these early ages, having "access by faith into this grace" wherein they

stood, rejoiced "in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. v. 2). Nay, that this gladness of hope was imported by them into 'the region and shadow of death'—made conspicuous in the very emblems and devices selected in their Catacombs. "In contemplating the subjects," says a recent writer, "with which the Christians of Rome decorated their sepulchres, the first thing that strikes us is a certain tone of joyousness . . . There is, in the Christian tombs, nothing of the sadness which often strikes us in the Etruscan. Here the vine with rich clusters spreads over the ceiling; laughing boys hold bunches of grapes; birds seem to flit to and fro. Spring sows the seed; Summer gathers the grape; Autumn the olive; Winter sits beside his fire; Cupid and Psyche . . . fill baskets with flowers; the Phoenix sits in the palm-tree. There are banquets, probably of mystic meaning; or the departed, richly clad, walk among the bowers of Paradise."¹

O Great Apostle of the Gentiles! As we follow thee with unequal steps in thy struggle-race, we will catch up the torch of hope thou hast left behind thee;—that "HOPE IN CHRIST," and in the great Beyond, which renders it impossible to be 'miserable,' however great the fight of afflictions may be. We shall accept, in thine own noble words, the panacea for all life's miseries—taking the sting out of its trials, and arching its future with the bow of 'strong consolation'—"We

¹ "Contemporary Review," March 1880.

are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal body . . . Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 8-10; 14, 16, 17). It may not be inappropriate to close with the prayer of the Apostle in another epistle: "*Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good HOPE through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work*" (2 Thess. ii. 16, 17).



IN PACE.

XI.

PERSEVERANCE IN CHRIST.

"The steadfastness of your faith IN CHRIST."—Col. ii. 5.

GOD, had He seen meet, could have so ordered that the Believer might have had his new spiritual life made at once absolutely complete. At the moment of transition from darkness to light He might have said—"If any man be IN CHRIST, the angel-life—the perfect life—has forthwith begun."

Not so. He has willed it, and wisely willed it, otherwise. Jesus, in speaking of those in whom that union was realised, says emphatically—"These are in the world" (John xvii. 11). He has decreed for His people a season of discipline, before the mystical oneness of earth is merged and consummated in everlasting union and communion in Heaven. The forty years' wilderness hardships precede the green fields and smiling vineyards of the true Canaan.

"IN CHRIST:"—and yet—"these are *in the world*!"—that world offering no smooth path—no exemption from trial and sin; rather, temptation without, having an answering echo to corruption within. Corruption

and temptation too, not only warring and wrestling, but alas ! at times overthrowing and mastering.

But blessed also is the counterpart truth—"God is faithful." The mournful deflections and aberrations of His people,—their *unfaithfulness*—will not affect His *faithfulness*. Nay, more; we have the recorded promise regarding His own, that "He will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will, with the temptation, make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 13). Even Satan, the roaring lion, is kept by Him as it were in a chain. The great Adversary was not permitted to put forth his hand so much as to touch righteous Job, till he received permission; and even then, the "Mightier than the mightiest" set bounds to his assailing power (Job i. 12). This Old Testament picture has its New Testament parallel in the case, not of one of God's patient, but of His *impatient* children, whose unadvised lips drew forth the consolatory assurance—"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke xxii. 31, 32).

These lamentable stumblings and fallings on the part of the believer (cause of deepest spiritual humiliation), are yet, as an old writer expresses it, "falls within the house." With broken-hearted penitence and contrition of soul he can, without presumption, still cleave to the glad and gracious assurance—"Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for

the Lord upholdeth him with His hand " (Ps. xxxvii. 24). " Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise " (Micah vii. 8). Mournful exceptions there may be, and often are, in the case of those who claim the Christian name. But with regard to all who are really IN CHRIST, let us ponder the sure word of promise under both the legal and Gospel dispensations. What says the former? " If they break My statutes, and keep not My commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. *Nevertheless* My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips " (Ps. lxxxix. 31-34); or, as it has been translated and confirmed in the language of the better covenant—" Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast " (Heb vi. 17-19).

Such seasons of declension and backsliding—in an unwatchful moment the fatal yielding to some sudden gust of temptation, may be regarded only as the rock which impedes the stream, frets its course or soils its purity, but which fails to stem its onward flow. Or,

to take a more apt illustration, the true 'life in Christ' resembles the ocean tide. Even while we watch its advance, it seems partially to recede. One moment a dash on the shingle, with a boom of muffled thunder; the next, borne back chafed and buffeted. Yet all the while it is steadily progressive. The scores you made a few minutes ago on the hard, unwashed sand, are now converted into a series of little pools, each silently telling that the retreat is only apparent, that soon the boats now moored on the beach will be floating on their own buoyant element.

So with the Christian. The spiritual retrogression we have spoken of, is often painfully visible—the wave of ardent feeling of to-day, refluxent to-morrow; to-day an Asahel, to-morrow a Ready-to-halt, perchance worse. But "faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. v. 24). Inviolable is the word—"He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. ii. 13). As well dream of arresting the apparently capricious advance of these tidal waters, as arrest the wavelets of spiritual life in the human soul once turned Godwards and heavenwards. In the Living Vine once, in the Vine for ever. On the Rock once, on the Rock for ever. In the fold once, in the fold for ever. "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John x. 28).

And this lets us into the true secret of 'the perseverance of the Saints,' that old article in the creed of

faithful churches, which is at times sneered at. The Apostle's monogram is the key to it—"IN CHRIST." It is nothing in believers themselves. They are like dismasted, rudderless vessels, tossed hither and thither by capricious waves; often 'the wind contrary,' or grazing the hidden rocks. But they are "kept by the power of God." "Finally, my brethren," says Paul, "be strong IN THE LORD" (in Christ), "and in the power of HIS might" (Eph. vi. 10). "I am crucified with Christ," says he in another place, as he paraphrases his own brief formula, "nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). That tempest-tossed bark would never have lived out the storm but for Him who now guides its helm. To him have the words of Omnipotence been spoken—"God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." "There shall be no loss of any man's life among you" (Acts xxvii. 24, 22). He will guide through winds and waves and buffeting elements till it can be said of the imperilled crew—"So HE brought them into the haven where they would be." Christ's own prayer of perpetual efficacy secures that safe landing on the eternal shore—"Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me" (John xvii. 11). "Oh! what a blessing," is the exclamation of the devout Evans, "that while the *light* of a believer's soul can decay and wax dim, the *life* of his soul is imperishable: it 'is hid with Christ in God.'"

It is interesting and remarkable, in connection with

these thoughts, to note the very last words of the last letter the great Apostle dictated immediately before his death:—"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. iv. 18).

Doubting, desponding one, "no small tempest lying on you," buffeted with a great fight of afflictions,—seek fully to realise this truth—"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, He increaseth strength" (Isa. xl. 29). At times God permits faltering and failure just to teach the lesson of your own weakness and of the Saviour's almighty strength. He who felt warranted in appropriating the honoured title IN CHRIST, reiterates again and again this needed lesson, claiming no immunity from the power and peril of temptation—"I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. vii. 23). Paul "*in Christ*," yet, at times, the reluctant captive of sin; mourning and deploring the unsteadfastness of his "faith in Christ!" "Does the greatness of this man oppress thee, instead of elevating thee?" asks one, who has ably analysed the Apostle's inner life—"Behold, are his own words, 'by the grace of God I am what I am:—' and in exhorting his beloved Philippians—"Brethren, be followers together with me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample" (Phil. iii. 17), he expects nothing of his brethren that is beyond the power of

the riches of God's grace working in them "both to will and to do" (Phil. ii. 13). "It shall be done," adds the same writer, "if we will but tread in the blessed footsteps of Paul's faith."¹

Thus 'treading,' with God's help, these trials and temptations which overcome others will be to you like the storm-blast to the oak moored in the rift of the rock: the very bending of the branches only tending to rivet the roots of faith, and trust, and love, firmer and deeper in the Rock of Ages. "That the trial of your faith," says a brother Apostle and companion in tribulation, "being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 7).

Remember, too, for your comfort, that He is as willing as He is able thus to "keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). You may take the words alike as a precept and a promise—"Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Rom. vi. 14).

Most precious and encouraging surely is this view to take of our mystical union with the Saviour! Yet it is one that carries with it a correspondingly deep and solemn responsibility—"I am not my own, I am bought with a price." "IN CHRIST"—"whose I am, and whom I serve" (Acts xxvii. 23). Like the gold

¹ Besser.

and silver and brazen vessels in the tabernacle of old, the believer is first dedicated, then consecrated. Though armour-proof, if not against the wiles of the devil, yet against his final triumph over "the faithful *in Christ Jesus*," still, the Christian warrior has also the monitory words recorded for his admonition, that it is only "he that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. x. 22). "We are made," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Heb. iii. 14).

"Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue *in the Son*" (1 John ii. 24).

"Therefore," is the tender and affectionate exhortation of "the man in Christ," as he rises to some elevating conception of the grandeur of that union which he so loves to contemplate,—the words themselves, which we shall reserve for future consideration, sound like an antiphon to those of the honoured son of Zebedee just quoted—"Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast IN THE LORD, my dearly beloved" (Phil. iv. 1).



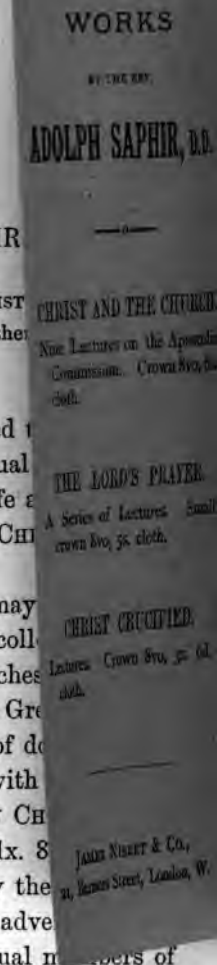
XII.

THE CHURCHES IN CHR

"The Churches of Judea which were IN CHRIST
 "In whom all the building fitly framed together
 an holy temple IN THE LORD."—Eph. ii. 21.

IN a previous meditation we noted
 fervent salutations to individual
Christ. The object of his life a
 was "to present *every man* perfect IN CH
 (Col. i. 28).

Under our present motto-verses we may
 speaking to, and of, believers in their coll
 city ;—Churches, and groups of Churches
 reminded of the beautiful symbol of the Gro
 as he saw in the Messianic age, flocks of do
 it may be in their plumage, speeding, with
 to the window of the true Ark ; safe IN CH
 the windy storm and tempest" (Isa. lx. 8
 still more apposite figure, employed by the
 Himself, to which we have previously adve
 not only does He speak of the individual m
 His flock, (calling His own (separate) sheep by *name*,



and, one by one, "leading them out"), but also referring to them in the aggregate. They constitute, though with divers folds and many under-shepherds, one great flock—reposing in the green pastures and by the 'waters of comfort,' under Himself, the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls.

The earliest in chronological order of all St. Paul's letters is the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. It is interesting surely to read its opening sentence, which in a sense may be regarded as the exordium or prologue of his whole series of inspired communications to the Church and Churches of the future. Thus it runs—"Unto the Church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST" (1 Thess. i. 1). His subsequent salutations and addresses to believers in this their corporate form, however varied be the figures and symbolism employed, combine in giving the main features in the Apostle's ideal of a true heaven-born Church, viz., that it is not only living, but inspired with *life* IN CHRIST. All Church-life is traced up to the Great Life-Giver. The laurel-wreath of the Apostle's own spiritual victories, in these different Churches he had planted, he lays at the feet of his Great Redeemer—"Are not ye my work *in the Lord*;" "The seal of mine apostleship are ye *in the Lord*" (1 Cor. ix. 1, 2). "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple *in the Lord*" (Eph. ii. 21). Even when he chal-

lenges respect and sympathy for his fellow-labourers, he thus recals the secret of success, by reminding of the golden link which binds the servants of the one household of faith to the Heavenly Master—"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you IN THE LORD" (1 Thess. v. 12). In the words of Archbishop Leighton, as he enlarges on one of the above—"The whole building is Christ mystical; Christ together with the whole body of the elect. He as the foundation, they as the stones built upon Him. He the living Stone, and they, by union with Him, living stones. He having life in Himself, and they deriving it from Him. He primitively living, and they by participation." IN CHRIST!—the Church throughout all the world has in this the alone pledge and guarantee of its stability and permanence. *In Christ!*—He walks in the midst of His seven golden candlesticks, and has the stars in His right hand (Rev. i. 13, 16), feeding every candlestick with the oil of His grace, and keeping every luminary in its sphere in the spiritual firmament. '*In Him*' the bush cannot be consumed. As good Samuel Rutherford quaintly expresses it—"That bush has been burning these five thousand years, but no man yet saw the ashes of that fire." Very significant are the Apostle's own words, as he seeks, under the most endearing of human emblems, to set forth the intensity of the Lord's attachment to His Church—"No man ever yet hated *his own flesh*, but nourisheth and cherisheth

it, even as the Lord the Church" (Eph. v. 29). When the divine Head of that Church Himself (employing a different figure) declares that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18): how shall they not prevail? Just because it is IN HIM. "On this Rock (Immutable, Immovable) will I build My Church." To destroy and engulf the cargo, you must first wreck the all-glorious Vessel which bears it. The Church collectively is so dear to Him, that it is spoken of in words we shall in a future chapter more particularly consider—as His very 'body,'—"the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 23). There are other things—other realms which contribute to that fulness. "On His head are *many* crowns." He wields creation's sceptre—The worlds were created "by Him and for Him." The light is His garment; the clouds are His chariot; the stars of heaven are a tiara for His brow. But He is "Head over all things *to the Church*" (Eph. i. 22). All other provinces of His vast empire are subordinated to this. If the material universe be His Temple, the Church is the Shekinah. If the one be the outer Court, the other is the Adytum,—the "Holy of holies." He is Lord over angels,—magnified, and lauded, and glorified by them. But even to these "principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known BY THE CHURCH the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 10). "Unto Him," is the Apostle's doxology in closing the most beautiful of his recorded prayers—"Unto Him be glory *in the Church* IN CHRIST

JESUS¹ throughout all ages, world without end " (Eph. iii. 21). If such, then, be His present interest in His Church, and such her own predestined glory, we may safely commit the steering of the vessel of salvation to the heavenly Pilot. Despite of winds, and tides, and adverse currents, He will ensure that she will ride out the storm, and reef her sails in peace in the quiet haven.

"IN CHRIST!" we may well write underneath the Pauline motto, words, which, as we have seen in our Preface, were wont to be traced in rude symbolism but with loving faith over the catacombed dead—"We have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil" (Heb. vi. 18, 19).

One other thought urgently suggests itself. If churches were to realise, more habitually and fully than they do, the sacredness of that golden link—"IN CHRIST"—(the superlative glory, yes, and responsibility of their mystical union with the Great Head), might we not prayerfully look and long for the removal of all unworthy jealousies and acerbities. How would the thought, how *ought* the thought, of "*one* IN HIM,"—to hush the din of rival faction and angry recrimination; shame into silence hard thoughts and hard

¹ *be* (in) in the original, not "by" as in our version.

names; banish from the religious vocabulary such a word as 'toleration:'—Christians *tolerating* Christians. Churches *tolerating* Churches. Strange paralogism of language! arming alike the British scoffer, and the Hindoo idolater, with a keen weapon of assault against "the truth as it is *in Jesus*." IN CHRIST, ought to be the death-blow to religious party. The nearer His people are *in Him*, whether in their individual or corporate capacity, the nearer they will be to one another. It is because of their distance from the central Sun that they move in such wide and devious orbits. As it is expressed by a thoughtful Christian of recent times—"The different modes in which different and differing people desire to do God's will are as lines converging to a common centre. When the true-hearted meet in the centre, in the real knowledge and love of God, the distance of the varied lines from each other has vanished away, and all is one."¹ "The Christian hope is common to them that are Christians, in which they all unite and meet; whereas, in reference to the hopes of other men, there is no such thing as a centre in which their hopes may unite and meet, and so they lie scattered. All the hopes of Christians do run into one hope."²

"What," it has been well said by yet another master in Israel, "what were the letters of this *man in Christ* to the Churches, but proclamations of peace,

¹ "Memorials of a Quiet Life."

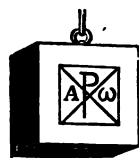
² Flavel.

edicts from the throne of Love, commanding Christians as they valued the Royal favour of the King of Saints, and hoped for a crown above, to love one another.”¹

The day is at all events promised, when “in sweet fellowship beyond the stream” we shall all come “in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. iv. 13). Then, at least, the realisation and consummation of this longed-for Church fellowship will be ensured. The Church of the present economy, as observed in a previous page, may, in a mingled, imperfect state (and that with no breach of true unity) be composed of varied folds, though one flock. But in ‘the pastures of the blessed,’ even this divergence will cease. The earthly fold will be no longer needed to protect from prowling robber and beast of prey. “The ransomed of the Lord,” united, glorified, will gather in eternal harmony on the golden meadows of heaven. Here, the varied portions of the wide universal Church are like the briny pools of water on the seashore. There is no incongruity in their remaining separate and apart: each with its own distinctive and accidental conformation of rock and shingle, sand and seaweed. But when the mighty tide of heavenly glory—the waves of the

¹ Dr. Harria. Chrysostom remarks that the “name of Christ is oftener mentioned in 1st Corinthians than in any other Epistle. The Apostle thereby designing to draw them away from their party admiration of particular teachers to Christ alone.”

eternal ocean of Divine love sweep over, "all shall be one!"—no trace of separation will remain. The amalgamation will be complete. "*One* IN CHRIST!" will be the boom of the everlasting surge of that unebbing sea. And the Apostle's own words will have their best and only true fulfilment—"Ye are all the children of God by faith IN CHRIST JESUS!"



XIII.


THE CHURCHES IN CHRIST.

“The Churches of Judea which were IN CHRIST.”—Gal. i. 22.

“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ. . . . But now IN CHRIST JESUS ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”—Eph. ii. 11-13.

“IN CHRIST JESUS neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.”—Gal. vi. 15.

“Ye are all one IN CHRIST JESUS.”—Gal. iii. 28.

 HERE is another aspect of the subject treated in the previous meditation, bearing on the Apostle's great motto, which demands a few passing thoughts. It is one that was very much local and temporary; having an almost exclusive reference indeed to the Apostolic age. As such, therefore, it is of limited interest as compared with the grandeur of that vast spiritual union, just considered, in reversion for the Church of the future.

But the subject is referred to in such distinct, and almost exulting terms (and that more than once), that

we cannot pass it altogether unnoticed. "IN CHRIST." That word—or rather the power and principle which it enshrines, was the mighty talisman that effected the strangest of all national and social revolutions: in the noblest sense of the term "turning the world upside down." To any diligent reader of St. Paul's Epistles, it is evident that next to his own marvellous conversion, there was nothing to him so wondrous, so almost incredible, as being able to speak of "the churches" in JUDEA which were "*in Christ*;"¹ the fusing (with all their antagonistic and irreconcilable elements) of Jew and Gentile "into one body." For what did such an amalgamation involve? The abandonment of all that an Israelite held most sacred. The renunciation of proud national and spiritual prerogative; the surrender of his chartered rights:—"to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises" (Rom. ix. 4). The Jew had no dealing with the Samaritan: the Jew and Samaritan together had still less dealing with the outside Gentile. The Gentile was 'ostracised:' regarded as 'a dog,' unclean, an "alien from the commonwealth of Israel and a stranger from the covenant of promise." No wonder that Paul should speak of the

¹ "*ταῖς ἐν Χριστῷ*." This addition was necessary when speaking of the Christian brotherhood of Judea, for the unconverted Jewish communities might still be called the churches of God."—BISHOP LIGHTFOOT.

demolition of that partition-wall as a "mystery;" something so astounding as to be entitled to the appellation of a New dispensation. Hear his own words—"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation He made known unto me *the mystery*" (Eph. iii. 1-3). And then note how explicitly he states, that this 'mystery'—this new charter-deed of admission within the household of faith—is inscribed "in the name which is above every name." The intervening veil, or curtain, is rent away IN CHRIST (2 Cor. iii. 14):—"That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise *in Christ* by the Gospel" (Eph. iii. 6); or, as he employs the same expression in writing to the Church of Colosse—"The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. i. 26, 27).

Nor did this wondrous moral and spiritual revolution terminate here. There were other conventional and hereditary barriers within the Jewish body politic, which might have been deemed equally insuperable, which shared in the demolition. To name but one of these (distinctive of most Oriental nations, and to *which*, partially at least, the Jew was no exception)—

the position which *females* held, socially and ecclesiastically. Men and women, even in their acts of worship, were divided. The Synagogue was rigidly partitioned for the separation of the sexes. The females sat screened "behind the lattice." They had their separate oratories for prayer. They had their assigned court in the Temple. But, in their case specially, an abolition of *caste* in domestic religious life was effected "IN CHRIST JESUS." Hear the Apostle's own words, which so graphically describe the breaking down of this barrier that severed Jew from Greek and male from female. The words, in connection with our theme, are surely very significant: the *monogram* is twice repeated—"For ye are all the children of God by faith IN CHRIST JESUS. For as many of you as have been baptized INTO CHRIST have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one IN CHRIST JESUS" (Gal. iii. 26-28).

Wondrous triumph! What, from the Jewish standpoint, would have been regarded and denounced as the most utopian of all dreams, not only rendered possible, but made an accomplished fact IN HIM: the wide, yawning gulph—national, social, and spiritual—filled up IN HIM: one undivided brotherhood and sisterhood IN HIM. It was a threefold superscription in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, that was written on the cross of Calvary—JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS:—testifying that *the kingdoms and peoples, and homes*

of the earth were IN HIM to be confederate. These outstretched arms of His, as He hung upon the tree, were designed figuratively to embrace no partial nationality, no exclusive covenant race, but a whole world He died to save:—Greek and Roman, master and slave, bondman and freeman, male and female. The Jew, the representative of spiritual exclusiveness; the Greek, the representative of advanced culture; the Roman, the representative of power; the slave, the representative of oppression; the female, the representative of weakness—"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all" (Col. iii. 11).

O Christ! how Thou hast broken the fetter of the crushed and down-trodden, and taken from man's helpmeet the curse of degradation; raising her from being his drudge to her birthright as his companion; purifying the domestic home; hallowing alike the domestic hearth and altar; mitigating the horrors of war and famine; opening the sluices of individual and national sympathy; providing asylums for the poor, shelter for the suffering, bread for the perishing, homes for the homeless, and better than all, salvation for the lost!

We are reminded of that memorable scene at the Beautiful Gate of the Jewish Temple of old, when Peter, challenged by the Jewish Sanhedrim to reveal the 'power,' or the 'name' by which he had wrought *so signal* a deliverance on the cripple; and when,

repudiating the possession of any virtue or efficacy in himself, he replied that it was by *the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth* (Acts iv. 10). The Gospel of the grace of God is, in the noblest figurative sense, that Beautiful Gate of Mercy opened *by Christ* and IN CHRIST, and which no man can shut. We behold the vast and varying, almost incongruous multitude, issuing forth from the healing portals under the life-giving impulse of that same all-glorious 'Name;' with their fetters broken, their diseases healed, their tongues unloosed, and souls saved, "walking and leaping, and praising God!"



XIV.

CONSOLATION IN CHRIST.

"If there be therefore any consolation¹ IN CHRIST."—Phil. ii. 1.

THIS is the very strongest way the Apostle has of asserting that there are many and abundant consolations IN CHRIST. Yea, "everlasting consolation and good hope through grace."

The form in which the expression is cast, is in accordance with similar phraseology he employs in unfolding other truths of vital moment. As, *e.g.*, in

¹ I am aware that the word translated 'consolation' (*παράκλησις*) in our English version, has by some been rendered rather "exhortation" (see Lightfoot and Eadie *in loco*). It is susceptible of either meaning. "The words," says the latter of these commentators, "are taken by some to denote the sphere of this *παράκλησις*; by others, to point to its source. In the one case the meaning is, "if in Christ there be any exhortation;" in the other, "if there be any consolation felt," or "if ye have any consolation through union with Christ." . . . "Examples of both meanings are so numerous, that they need not be quoted. The meanings are allied in this way, that the exhortation is often intended to impart comfort or results in it" (pp. 83, 84). We have retained the rendering in our A.V. which is supported by Chrysostom, Theodoret, Calvin, Grotius, and others.

1st Corinthians xv., where the conditional particle "if" is introduced, again and again, in a series of propositions,—not in the way of insinuating doubt, but rather of imparting emphasis to his argument.

These consolations, let it be specially noted, are represented by him as being found *in Christ and Christianity*. "God, at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (Heb. i. 1). But, among these Seers, Isaiah stands out almost alone as the prophet of 'consolation,' with his "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people" (Isa. xl. 1). While, even in his case, all his choicest clusters of solace are gathered, not from Judaism, but from "the Plant of Renown"—"the Branch out of the stem of Jesse." His brightest constellations of promise shine in the future firmament, of whose glories he was the evangelical Interpreter. Into the lips of the yet distant Messiah he puts the glowing words—"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isa. lxi. 1-3). In a well-known picture, the great

artist, with the audacity of genius, seeks to reflect this noble utterance of the prophet, and to delineate on canvas the sublimest of Gospel verities, with the title of '*Christ the Consoler*.' Judaism, I repeat, was not the religion of consolation. By it, affliction, in its varied forms, was regarded as purely retributive,—the proof and token of the Divine displeasure. Judaism extorted the reproachful wail from the widow of Zarephath, as she addressed the man of God, terror-stricken and heart-broken in the presence of death—"Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" (1 Kings xvii. 18). "I am the man," was the exclamation of the plaintive prophet of Judah, "who have seen affliction by the rod of His wrath" (Lam. iii. 1). "Such" (was the cruel verdict of "miserable comforters" as they pointed to the degraded Prince of the East on his bed of sackcloth and ashes)—"Such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God" (Job xviii. 21).

Christ, and Christianity, came, with their grander revelations, to show that the sorrows and trials of life are not penal, but disciplinary,—pledges of divine love. The cypress is interweaved with the palm of victory. In the words of an eloquent writer, in speaking of the mission of afflictions—"They are not the forecastings of a coming storm, but the distillings of a mercy-cloud sailing athwart the azure sky of a *soul IN CHRIST*."

'The Consolations in Christ,' constitute a theme far too wide to be embraced in a few brief sentences.

Though by no means more prominent or valuable than others that might be named, let me select two, suggested by the sentence in the Intercessory Prayer of the Great Consoler—"I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John xvii. 23): the Father revealed in the Son, and the Son revealed in the experience of His people.

The first of these consolations is the revelation made *by* Christ and *in* Christ of THE FATHER.

The fundamental question of all theology—of all religion—is, Who is God? What is the nature of that august, invisible Being, who sways the sceptre of universal empire;—in whose presence I live now, and to whom I have the instinctive feeling (even were that not otherwise countersigned by His inspired, authoritative Message) that I shall at last be accountable? Is He the awful God of the Pagan mythology, enthroned in Olympian thunders and tempests, with a terrible reserve of power; all loveless, unsympathetic; unknowable and unknown? Especially do these thoughts press for solution in times of trial; seasons of sudden and appalling bereavement; when the lights of life are suddenly dimmed or eclipsed—the staff mysteriously removed—the rod cruelly broken. "Tell me," is the cry of the smitten one in such hours of piteous desolation—"Tell me about this Great Sovereign who holds the balance of life and death in

His hand, who has come forth from the inscrutable recesses of His own Being, and touched me to the quick." "Tell me Thy name," was the request that burst in trembling terror from the lips even of a child of the covenant, as he confronted a mysterious *Presence* at the brook Jabbok (Gen. xxxii. 29). What was the recorded answer to that very query? We may listen to it as given in the night of a more mysterious agony by the same adorable ONE, who in Angel-form had wrestled with the Patriarch—"I have manifested *Thy Name* unto the men whom Thou hast given Me out of the world" (John xvii. 6). Set in the true antitypical Rock-cleft, we listen to the proclamation of the Divine name. But, glorious as was the revelation to Moses of Jehovah, as "the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious," it is a more gracious, more loving revelation still: "*My Father, and your Father; My God, and your God*" (John xx. 17). Nay, "He that hath seen Me," said Jesus on that same night of the betrayal, "hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). 'I am the visible image and embodiment of the Invisible God.' 'And tell Me,' we may imagine Him asking, 'How have I been seen?' It is "full of *grace* and *truth*;"—receiving the penitent, welcoming the prodigal, giving bread to the hungry and health to the diseased, rest of soul and body to the weary and heavy-laden, weeping over the loved and lost, putting music into the lips of the bereaved and broken-hearted, forgiving renegade disciple and blaspheming

murderer, and taking as companion to heaven that expiring felon. "Say unto the cities of Judah, 'Behold (in Me) *your God*'" (Isa. xl. 9).

Yes! "No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18). And He hath *thus* declared Him: not the myth of philosophy; not some impalpable principle or property of matter, or attribute of mind. But a living, loving *Person*. Not love, but the loving ONE:—not Omnipotence, but the Omnipotent ONE. Not the inscrutable inapproachable Sovereign, wielding a stern sceptre, and promulgating stern decrees; but the gracious Parent, over whose every behest and dispensation—even those most baffling to sense and sight—you can write, "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things" (Luke xii. 30). Listen to the words of the Apostle. How he seems to delight to dwell with reiterated emphasis on the loving Name! "Grace be to you and peace from God our *Father*, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *Father* of mercies, and the God of all comfort: who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Cor. i. 2-4).

(2.) The one other "Consolation IN CHRIST" we may now refer to, rising naturally out of the other, is

the manifestation of Himself, in the experience of His people, alike as the Surety-Redeemer and the sympathising Friend.

Jude the Apostle put the anxious question, "Lord, *how* is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us?" (John xiv. 22). The whole incarnation was an answer to that query. I may embody it, however, in the terse and apposite sentence of an old divine (Dr. South, 1633): "This happiness does Christ vouchsafe to all His, that as a Saviour He once suffered *for* them, and that as a Friend he always suffers *with* them."

Though we have just spoken of the inferiority of the old dispensation in its code of comfort, we may, nevertheless, in illustrating this manifestation of Christ as 'Consoler,' borrow from Judaism one of its beautiful types;—that, too, from the earliest days of its economy. It is an episode in the life of the most attractive and lovable of the 'Pilgrim Fathers.' Let the patriarch Joseph typically reveal the forgiveness, sympathy, and love of that Saviour he so remarkably prefigured. Look at the touching scene recorded in Genesis xlv. 15: "Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them; and after that his brethren talked with him." How descriptive of the true Joseph, when His brethren find themselves in His presence! It is the moment of joyous reconciliation. Jesus first imparts the kiss of *forgiveness*. There is no possible *consolation* without that. Then comes the outburst

of fond *love* (for there might be reconciliation between contending parties, without any manifestation of such affectionate solicitude). It might be a cold, unsympathetic remission of debt, or formal pardon of offence—no more. But the true “Brother born for adversity”—the Friend that sticketh closer than any brother—lets fall the tears of tenderest love. Then note, still further, what follows—“And *after that*, his brethren talked with him.” Here we have as a natural, but touching sequence, the consolation of mutual fellowship and intercommunion between Christ and His people. The Bible is the medium of that divine communion on His part. Prayer is the medium of that hallowed fellowship on theirs.¹ It reminds of the simple saying of a converted New Zealander:—“I open my Bible, God talks with me: I shut my Bible, and go to my knees, and I talk with God.” May that kiss of gracious reconciliation, and that tear of blissful sympathy, be ours. If really and truly “IN CHRIST,” they *are* so!

Reader! while you exult in the gracious revelation of the Father, rejoice also in the loving, exalted sympathy of the Brother in your nature—the divine-human Friend. Make the prayer of ‘the man in Christ’ your own—“That I may know Him, . . . and the fellowship of His sufferings” (Phil. iii. 10). He knows all the peculiarities of your trials;—every drop

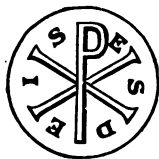
¹ I am indebted for this illustration to a friend.

in your cup,—for He Himself drained that cup, filled with every ingredient of sorrow. Oh, when the hour of sudden desolation cometh as a whirlwind,—when the choicest flowers of the earthly garden droop their heads, and hide their dewy tears amid withered leaves and blighted stems, exuding only the fragrance of decay,—accept *all* as the loving, though mysterious, means employed by Him who Himself once “*suffered being tempted,*” to transfer your thoughts and affections to the better Eden, where no flower is known to languish, no frost to injure, no sun to scorch; where the very tears distilled during the night-watches of earth will be transformed into dewdrops sparkling in the morning sunshine of immortality. Meanwhile, carry the cross which He has appointed; take it up *in* Him, and bear it *for* Him. Amid a present experience, it may be of clouds and darkness, be it yours to feel in the words of one of God’s tried children—“My real life is that hidden with Christ in God, which is a never-failing wellspring of delight. . . . To have the gulph removed which separated me from God, to feel that union as of a branch in the Vine, makes all suffering appear light, since it is His will. Since by it we may be more closely conformed to His image who was made perfect through suffering.”¹ “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ, . . . that as ye are partakers of

¹ “*Memorials of a Quiet Life,*” ii. 125-26.

the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation " (2 Cor. i. 5-7).

" *As ye have been partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.*" Yes. Like the aged Simeon in the Jewish temple of old, *wait* for " THE Consolation of Israel " (Luke ii. 25). A waiting-time may be needed before " the why and the wherefore " of His dealings are made manifest. But if, like that patriarch of the dawning Gospel dispensation, you take the promised Saviour in the arms of your faith, the day will come (it may be now, it may be at death, it assuredly will be on entering the better Jerusalem Temple above), when you shall with him also, not in a '*Nunc Dimittis*,' but in a glorious '*Jubilate*,' be able to say, " Mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation ! " " It is good that a man should both hope and quietly *wait* for the saivation of the Lord " (Lam. iii. 26).



XV.

THE DEAD IN CHRIST.

"The dead IN CHRIST."—1 Thess. iv. 16.

"Them also which sleep IN JESUS."—1 Thess. iv. 14.



THOUGHTFUL divine of recent times, almost as if our Apostle's monogram guided his pen, thus writes of "*dying in the Lord.*" "It is the child of God falling asleep in the same arms of redeeming Love in which he was always embraced, and where he always was safe. In the peace of God."¹

How blessed, alike for ourselves, and for those near and dear to us, such a certainty! "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. v. 1). How different the hesitating guesses of the noblest heathen, regarding "the land beyond the Stygian river:" such as we find in the utterances of Socrates and Plato, Tacitus and Cicero! One of these, in an epistle to a friend who had lost a relative, says,

¹ Bishop M'Ilvaine.

"If there be a life beyond death, he has gone to it." All was vague and uncertain—a dreary, dreamy, groping in the dark : and their Elysium, when spoken of, is one crowded with materialistic images never touching the realm of the spiritual. Explorers of the Roman Catacombs, or of their subterranean treasures transferred elsewhere, have frequently noted the cheerless, hopeless form in which the grief of Pagan mourners is expressed. No divine loving Hand recognised ;—no unerring Wisdom trusted when it cannot be traced. Inexorable *Fate* is spoken of as the alone deity presiding over human destiny ! Here is the translation of one such inscription given by a well-known archæologist from the Lapidarian Gallery :—"CAIUS JULIUS MAXIMUS, aged 2 years and 5 months :—

"O relentless Fortune, who delightest in cruel death ; why is Maximus so early snatched from us ? He who used to be beloved in my bosom ! This stone now marks his tomb. Behold his mother !"

How different the legend written by the Apostle on the catacombs of universal Christendom !—IN CHRISTO. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him " (1 Thess. iv. 13, 14), or, as these words, in accordance with the permitted alternative rendering of the original, may

be translated—"Them also that are *laid asleep by Jesus.*"¹

How many thousands on thousands have had these utterances verified, for their unspeakable solace, since the Apostle penned them! To select illustrative cases were impossible: let one which at the moment presents itself suffice. Stand in thought beside the Great Luther, as we see him stooping, first over the death-bed of his loved daughter Magdalene, and then follow him in the mournful sequel of that life-sorrow. "Gracious God!" he exclaims, "if it be Thy will to take her hence, I am content to know that she will be with Thee . . . I would fain keep my child, for she is very dear to me, if our Lord God would leave her with me. But His will be done. To her nothing better can happen . . . Thou dear one," he exclaimed through his tears when all was over, and he gazed upon the coffin, "how well it is with Thee! . . . Thou shalt rise and shine like a star, yes, like the sun . . . You should be pleased," added he to the bystanders, who had come to render the last offices of affection: "I have sent a saint to heaven." As

¹ Our word "Cemetery" (*Κοιμητήριον*) was familiar to Pagan writers; but, in its literal acceptation only, as an ordinary "sleeping-place." Christianity stamped upon it a new and more sacred meaning, associating it with the believer's last couch of rest when laid in the tomb, "in sure and certain hope of a resurrection to Eternal Life." By being *in Christ*, the departure of the soul was no longer the gloomy "mors" of the heathen. In the words of St. Jerome—"Mors, non est mors, sed dormitio et somnus appellatur."—See Dictionary of Christian Antiquities, p. 329, art. *Cemetery*.

they returned from the funeral,—“My daughter,” he said, “is now provided for, both in body and soul. We Christians have nothing to complain of. We know it must be so. We are more sure of eternal life than anything else. For God, who has promised it to us for His dear Son’s sake, can never lie.” And, yet once more, in his silent, darkened home, from which the glory had departed, he thus writes a cherished friend: “I from my inmost heart crave that to me and all mine, to thee also and all dear to us, may be given a like hour of departure, that is truly to *fall asleep* IN THE LORD.”¹

But let us not, in the record of these and such like ‘reliquaries,’ be mistaken. In no respect dare the Christian, no, not the heroic Luther, speak lightly of the terrors of death. Indeed, even in that solemn passage of his life, he speaks of “quivering” under the foe. It is not poetry, but nature, that dictates the words—

“It is a dread and awful thing to die.”

Though the last enemy, and a vanquished enemy, death is still *an enemy*, which no stoical resolution can transform into an angel of light. He is the closer of the portals of busy existence,—the silencer of the shuttles of life’s busy loom,—the extinguisher of fond hopes,—the witherer of tender buds,—the severer of loving bonds,—the separator of chief friends, brother

¹ See Luther’s “Watchwords for the Warfare,” *passim*.

sundered from brother, sister from sister ; parent from child, child from parent ; putting stern denial on any permanent " union here of hearts." Even the death-bed of the maturest, ripest saint, can claim no exemption from the inevitable accompaniments : the pain, and languor, and weakness ; the feeble ' touch of the vanishing hand ; ' the trembling whispers of the voice that is so soon to be still ; the conscious opening, on the earthward side, of the dark Gate and its close on silent hinges. Yes, on every lip, the mourning wail is the same—

"To know that prayers, and time, and pain
Can the lost love no more regain ;
Than bid the hours of dying day
Gleam in their midnight-noon again ! "

The dead past cannot bury its dead. The dead present cannot fill the vacant chair or bring back the absent guest to the vacant soul. The following snatches from the wild coronachs of Ossian—that strange Classic of mountain-lands—are only specimen-dirges of wide humanity :—" How many be there of my heroes, the chief of the race ; they that were cheerful in the hall when the sound of the shells arose ! No more shall I find their steps on the hearth : no more shall I hear their voice in the chase ! Pale, silent, are they who were my friends ; . . . and there, far remote, I shall be unknown. No bard shall hear of me, no grey cairn shall rise to my renown. . . . It is the voice of Alpin, the *son of Song*, mourning for the dead. Bent is his head

of age, red his tearful eye. Alpin, thou son of Song, why alone on this silent hill? Why complainest thou as a blast in the wood, as a wave on the lonely shore? My tears are for the dead: my voice for those who have passed away. Tall thou art on the hill; fair among the sons of the vale. But thou shalt fall like Morar; the mourner shall sit on thy tomb. The hills shall know thee no more; thy bow shall lie in the halls unstrung!"

Paul is represented as speaking of death as a *departure*. In the original, the simile is rather that of a vessel that is about to set sail.¹ In one sense the Apostle's metaphor cannot be dissociated from sadness. "Set sail"—the Vessel long familiar to us, as it rode at anchor in life's harbour, with the scenes of stirring existence around. Now, its cable is unloosed, its anchor is weighed. Friends crowd the pier to wave the last farewell, as with canvas set, it departs on the mysterious voyage to the "undiscovered country" from which there is no return! But let our Apostle finish his unfinished sentence. "Having a desire to depart" (to set sail), "and to be WITH CHRIST, which is *far better!*" Immediately all is changed. The vessel is chartered for a nobler Haven; "mortality is swallowed up of life." "This is the only one aspect," says Bishop Ellicott, using the familiar monogram, "in which death does not seem absolutely intolerable, and that is, *dying*

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 6, ἀναλυσίς.—See Barnes' Commentary *in loc.*

IN CHRIST: dying in Him who trod the death-realm before us;—dying in Him who tasted death, that whether we live or die, whether we remain clothed or unclothed, we should never be separate from His sympathy and love.”¹ His people were one with Him in the Easter triumph of the ever-memorable morning, when at the entrance to His tomb “the stone was rolled away;”—the glorious evidence that He *had* risen. They thereby received a pledge of their own resurrection-life—their own triumph over death:—“He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies” (Rom. viii. 11). To revert to that other familiar and significant simile of our Apostle we have already alluded to in a recent chapter—the Redeemer was “the first-fruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. xv. 20). We there saw that as the earliest gatherings of the fields of Palestine were of old carried with pomp and joy to the Jewish temple, and waved as an offering before the Lord,—the pledge alike of coming vintage and harvest: So has Christ—the first sheaf of the immortal harvest—been taken to the heavenly altar-courts—the earnest of the fruit of His own soul-travail yet to follow. “I myself cannot die. I live *in Christ*; and though, at His call, I may enter on a new and untried state of being, I shall but part with my earthly tenement, ‘as a bird escaped from the snare of the fowler,’ to rejoice in my deliverance

¹ “Destiny of the Creature,” p. 73.

from a cumbrous body, that clogs the free and full exercise of all my powers. As the husk of the chrysalis I shall cast it aside, and rise out of it to soar above the dark clouds and mists of earth into the pure and serene atmosphere of heaven, where dwell only those who are holy and heavenly—the perfected spirits of the redeemed.¹”

¹ “*Memorials of a Quiet Life*,” ii. 290.

IN HOC VINCES



XVI.

THE DEAD IN CHRIST.

"The dead **IN CHRIST**."—1 Thess. iv. 16.

"Them also which sleep **IN JESUS**."—1 Thess. iv. 14.



ET us pursue these thoughts a little further.

"The dead **IN CHRIST**"—"Asleep **IN JESUS**."

Yes, so thoroughly has Jesus conquered death by His own dying, that He is said, in the Apostle's emphatic words, to have "*abolished* death." He has flooded the dark valley with light for His departing people. He has converted its gloomy rolling mists into golden clouds, opening vistas into Paradise.

"For them the silver ladder shall be set,
Their Saviour shall receive their latest breath;
They travel to a fadeless coronet,
Up through the Gate of death."¹

Matthew Henry well calls death "a parenthesis in the believer's history." Being already **IN CHRIST**, their removal implies not really a change of state, but only a change of locality,—a glorious step in the law of endless development—the presence and love of Christ

¹ A. A. Proctor.

now enjoyed by faith, then enjoyed by sight in full beatific vision and fruition. The prayer of Stephen is the death-song of every true saint: "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*" "I myself cannot die," to quote again from the records of the same saintly life as in the preceding meditation,—"I live *in Christ*;—and though at His call I may enter on a new and untried state of being, I shall but part with my earthly tenement, 'as a bird escaped from the snare of the fowler,' to rejoice in my deliverance from a cumbrous body, that clogs the free and full exercise of all my powers. As the husk of the chrysalis I shall cast it aside, and rise out of it to soar above the dark clouds and mists of earth into the pure and serene atmosphere of heaven, where dwell only those who are holy and heavenly—the perfected spirits of the redeemed."

Those who have been in Rome will remember that the *Via Sacra* (the highway for the ancient laurel-wreathed conquerors leading to the Capitol, with the Temple of Jupiter crowning its summit) is not very far distant from the Catacomb of St. Calixtus, of which we have already frequently spoken. Death, to believers, is the true *Via Sacra*, with its triumphal arch conducting to the heavenly Temple, and to the presence of the enthroned King, who is Himself the crown and consummation of their bliss: from His lips to receive the welcome of the fulfilled promise—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am

set down with My Father in His throne" (Rev. iii. 21).

(1.) Then, as regards our own departure. If "IN CHRIST:—" "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Voltaire, in one of his letters, says, "I hate life, and yet I am afraid to die." Contrast this with the Christian's experience, as interpreted by St. Paul: "*Whether* we wake or sleep," whether we continue on earth, or fall asleep on our death-pillow, "we shall live together with Him" (1 Thess. v. 10). *In* Christ and *with* Christ; this is, in brief, the history of the believer's limitless future. The Bible picture of heaven is not merely the negative one, of deliverance from the ills of life, the ending of the long-drawn sigh and wail of humanity; but it is the positive enjoyment of the Redeemer's Presence. Here is the morning which follows the night of earth: "What time I awake, I am still *with* THEE!" We have lately quoted Luther's words of solace over his loved child;—appropriate was the closing prayer at his own deathbed—"O heavenly Father, though I must resign my body, and be borne away from this life, I know that I shall be with Thee for ever!"

When the many thousands of Israel crossed of old the Jordan—the waters standing up as a wall on either side, and they marched dry-shod through the channel—every eye was directed to the sacred symbol preceding them. So of the Great Antitype it may be said, as *His* people pass through the darksome river of which

the other has ever been the type, "Behold, the Ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan" (Jos. iii. 11). It was the reflected glory of Jesus (IN CHRIST), which caused the face of the doomed protomartyr to appear to those who looked steadfastly on him, "as it had been the face of an angel" (Acts vi. 15). "Blessed are the dead which die IN THE LORD" (Rev. xiv. 13).

(2.) As regards departed friends:—"Weep not!" He, or she, "is not dead, but *sleepeth*" (Matt. ix. 24). He, or she, is not dead, but *liveth*! God "giveth His beloved sleep":—not the slumber spoken of by the Poet—

"Sleep the sleep that knows no waking,"

but that which is to precede and usher in the everlasting morning. It was with the prospect of that glorious day-dawn and of a joyous reunion, that the learned and loving Neander uttered the touching words as he composed himself on his dying pillow,—"*Good-night!*" The first of our motto-verses forms but one clause in a sentence of joyous consolation to mourners, which has this most blissful ending—"And so shall *we* ("we"—a little word, but implying and involving the assured hope of blissful restoration to those we mourn), "*ever be with the Lord.*"

"Not *here*,—God be thanked, no—not here; living and not dead *yonder*, with the Master! We are far too much the creatures of sense; and the accompani-

ments of dissolution and departure fill up our hearts and our eyes. Think them all away, believe them all away, love them all away. Stand in the light of Christ's life, and Christ's death, and Christ's rising, till you feel "Thou art a shadow, not a substance; no real thing at all." Yes, a shadow; and where a shadow falls, there must be sunlight above to cast it. Look up, then, above the shadow Death, above the sin and separation from God, of which it is the shadow! Look up to the unsetting light of the Eternal Life on the throne of the universe, and see bathed in it the living dead, *in Christ*."¹

"The Living Dead IN CHRIST!"—It conveys the tender rebuke to the disconsolate Believer, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" The elevating thought plucks the sting from death and robs the grave of its victory. It tells of a meeting-place, where these "loved and lost" shall be loved never to be lost again, but permitted to exult in ties which defy dissolution. The mourners of the first ages had no monopoly of the lines they delighted so fondly to trace—

"IN JESU CHRISTO OBDORMIVIT."²

¹ Dr. Maclaren's Sermons, p. 103.

² *In Jesus Christ he fell asleep.* From their bearing on the theme of this volume and of this chapter, the author may be forgiven quoting the following, he has written elsewhere. The familiar Scottish pronunciation of the verb is retained :—

Oh precious tale of triumph this,
And martyr-blood shed to achieve it !
Of suffering past—of present bliss—
"IN JESU CHRISTO OBDORMIVIT."

Of cherished dead be mine the trust,
Thrice-blessed solace to believe it !
That I can utter o'er their dust—
“ IN JESU CHRISTO OBDORMIVIT.”

Sad were indeed this world to me,
With thoughts of loved ones called to leave it,
But for that angel's lullaby—
“ IN JESU CHRISTO OBDORMIVIT.”

Now to the silent grave I bring
My immortelle, and interweave it
With God's own golden lettering—
“ IN JESU CHRISTO OBDORMIVIT.”

Since the preceding chapters were finished, I have been reminded, in the pages of Boldetti, of the following well-known and touching inscription from the cemetery of Calixtus, probably of date the middle of the third century. It is a lengthened one, but thus it begins :—“ ALEXANDER MORTVVS NON EST, SED VIVIT SUPER ASTRA. IN CHRISTO.” (*Alexander is not dead, but lives beyond the stars. In Christ.*)




IN PACE.

XVII.

THE GATHERING INTO ONE IN CHRIST.

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things IN CHRIST, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth ; even IN HIM."—Eph. i. 10.

 HE Apostle's monogram has here a special significance added to it, by the pronoun which closes the verse. As it has been expressed by an able commentator: "With what force and pertinence this passage re-echoes the vital words . . . *In Him*, . . . an emphasis which the repetition of the words 'Even in Him,' seems specially designed to enhance."

The verse is confessedly a difficult and enigmatical one. But keeping in view the IN CHRISTO as the pivot, so to speak, on which it turns, we may take it, as suggestive at least, of various thoughts regarding this "dispensation" (as it is here called) "of the fulness of times," whose characteristic is the "gathering together in one all things *in Christ*."

Let, however, two remarks be premised for the better elucidation of the verse. The first is, that the

expression "gather together in one," of our version, is comprised in a single word in the original Greek. As the Apostle refers to this gathering as being IN CHRIST, he evidently speaks of an aggregation round *Him* as the centre. The interpretation of the figure by the commentator Grotius, as "the reunion of a dispersed army," is incomplete, unless we add the rallying of broken ranks around the Great Chief or Spiritual Captain. It has been more appropriately supposed by others to have reference to an orator recapitulating to his auditory at the close of his speech; "gathering together into one" the scattered links of thought and argument, familiarly known as 'the heads of his discourse.'¹ If so, we repeat, it is "*in Christ*."

A second preliminary observation of a critical kind is in regard to the word in the opening of our verse, '*dispensation*,' which has a special significance and signification in the original, not conveyed in our rendering, (*Oikonomía*). Its literal reference is to house arrangement, the conduct of household affairs; and in its connection with this 'whole family in heaven and earth,' it is suggestive of the righteous administration of the Great Master of the Household. The unfolding of the Christian dispensation is an "*Economy*." One age of progress and advancement gives birth to another, until the evolution of cycles, and eras, and dispensations, culminates in "the fulness of times."

¹ See Barnes, in *loc*.

As little as the material world owes its present beauty and order to the exploded myth of an old dreamer (the 'fortuitous concourse of atoms'), has the realm of the spiritual been left uncontrolled to caprice of circumstance. There are no disjointed links in the chain of the divine administration. The God of the Christian economy is a God of order. The spiritual fabric of which He is the Architect is symmetrically built. "The whole building fitly framed together,"—planned in systematic and harmonious beauty in the counsels of Eternity, has been age after age "growing unto an holy Temple in the Lord." And tier will be added to tier, column to column, till the termination of the appointed cycles. There has been a knitting together of the separate parts in the mystical body, by a gradual process of development, till it reaches "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," the perfect man IN HIM.

Let us now proceed to note the more special lessons contained in our motto-verse.

(1.) The primary and obvious reference of the words is that which we have already considered in a previous meditation, and on which we need not further linger—the gathering together of Jew and Gentile; the unfolding of "the mystery hid from ages and generations" (Col. i. 26), when the middle wall of partition was broken down;—when the Jew, long exclusive and *excluding*, came to own and recognise as "brothers in

Christ," those Gentile proselytes who lived in the Pagan cities to which the circular epistle was written. Foremost, doubtless, among these, would be some who had before proclaimed as their alone deity, the Great Diana of the *Ephesians*, whose image had fallen down from Jupiter (Acts xix. 35). In one sense, therefore, this "gathering into one"—this strange fusion of incongruous elements—was the immediate result of the Incarnation of Christ. "*Even in Him.*" But for the cross of Jesus, the words of Paul in this same epistle never could have been spoken—"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone" (Eph. ii. 19, 20).

(2.) But this view is a restricted and a partial one, local and temporary. The words suggest a much wider and grander interpretation in relation to Christ's Government of the Universe.

Observe that "gathering into One, *even in Him,*" is further emphasised in the succeeding clause;—"all things which are in heaven and which are on earth." Surely the mere welding together of two dispensations must fall far short of the full meaning of the Apostle. It is indeed a lofty thought—that of a vast creation, inclusive of things celestial and terrestrial, being brought under the sway of the Incarnate Redeemer; well worthy of being designated "a dispensation."

"All things," we read elsewhere, were made, not only "by Him" but "for Him." "He hath put all things under His feet." The elementary truth of theology, reiterated throughout inspired Scripture, represents this earth, by reason of sin, as having forfeited the divine regard. Not only so, but that in being separated from God, it was sundered from all that was holy and happy in God's universe. IN CHRIST the yawning gulf has been bridged: this blessed union and intercommunion between man and other members of the wide family of God has been resumed. Again IN HIM are heaven and earth made a united empire. Angels who had never swerved from their allegiance, once more become "ministering spirits," sent forth in the sublimest of embassies, "to minister to them who are heirs of salvation." Our planet is reponed to its place in the brotherhood of holy and loyal worlds, under the harmony of a reign of law and a reign of love.

Observe further; that in our motto-verse this 'gathering into one' is not of all *persons*, but of "all *things*." The 'earth' here spoken of, may be taken in its most literal meaning. The inanimate is included with the animate. The realm material is to share the blessedness of the realm spiritual. The very outer creation, whose fair face is blighted and scarred by sin, is to participate in the regeneration "*in Christ Jesus*," "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Magnificent theme of contemplation! we again say—*(too magnificent for a few brief sentences)*—that Jesus

is the mighty "King Regent" of this vast administration,—“the Restorer of the breaches!” No wonder Paul loves the repetition “*Even in Him.*” “His spiritual mediative work has secured it, and His mediatorial Person is the spiritual centre of the universe. As the stone dropped into the lake creates those widening and concentric circles which ultimately reach the furthest shore; so the deed done on Calvary has sent its blessed undulations through the distant spheres and realms of God’s great empire.”¹ We may add with Luther, “Although other empires, kingdoms, principalities, and dominions have their changes, and soon fall away like flowers, this kingdom, on the contrary, has roots so firm and deep, that by no force nor might can it be torn up or laid waste, but abides for ever.”

(3.) A third view that may be taken, not less glorious and animating, is one, unlike those already stated, as it belongs to the future. It is prospective and reversionary; and, in one sense, to which the others are subordinate. This yet higher reference is set forth and expounded by the Apostle in 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52: “Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” In this sense the *things* spoken of ‘in heaven and earth,’ must be

¹ Dr. Eadie, “Commentary on Ephesians,” p. 53.

taken in their more special application to *persons*. "The fulness of times" may thus be regarded as the winding up of the present dispensation, when the number of the elect shall be accomplished. Those 'on *earth*' referring to "the quick,"—believers who shall be alive when the Lord comes. Those *in heaven*, referring to the vast company of those who have fallen asleep:—"the dead in Christ." And "the *mystery*" (well may it be so called in the verse immediately preceding) will be the wondrous transformation and renovation of the whole family of the Redeemed—from Abel, downward to its last member, on the day of Resurrection; when "He shall send His angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of earth to the uttermost part of heaven":—when, at the same solemn moment, "He shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. iii. 21). "As the dewdrops," says a devout writer on the words we are now considering—"spangle the ground, ere they are exhaled when the sun bursts in his glory from the morning sky; so shall His people awake from their graves, and stand in regenerated life and glory as they rise to meet their Lord in the air. This is the consummation of that great mystery, 'the gathering together of all things in Christ' of which the Apostle speaks. Then shall we behold Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and *all the saints* of old, all the Old Testament Church, and

the New Testament Church, '*the whole family in heaven and earth*':—then shall we behold these all gathered together IN CHRIST. . . . Oh, when the trumpet shall sound, shall we be among those '*Blessed and holy*' who have 'part in the first resurrection'? (Rev. xx. 6). And, *In the dispensation of the fulness of times*, shall we be among those of earth or heaven that are *gathered together* IN CHRIST, by grace, to glory?"¹

(4.) There is yet a fourth view, also prospective, suggested by the Apostle's words, which may admit, at all events, of reverential pondering:—it is what in a permissible, and evangelical, but not in an unwarranted and speculative sense, may be called the view of *universal restoration*. Let none misapprehend, or misunderstand; as if by this, recognition were given to a new article in the creed of what is called 'advanced modern thought';—the theory propounded first by Origen, and revived in these later days.

It is a subject, indeed, upon which, we willingly own, no one can presumptuously dogmatise. We dare not, on the one hand, impeach or tamper with the Divine Justice and Righteousness. Neither, on the other, can we, poor mortals, assign limits to the same divine, boundless Love. "With God" (whatever be compatible with His rectitude, and truth, and other moral attributes) "with God *all* things are possible." To His Church, and to all who believe in His Son's

¹ M'Ghee on Ephesians, pp. 53-55.

name, "His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting." Nay, further, there is a glorious future—a glorious *unity*, waiting that Church, when the earthly Prayer we have already quoted of the Great Intercessor shall be fulfilled, "that they may be made perfect in one:"—"that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us" (John xvii. 21). "In that day there shall be one Lord and His name one" (Zech. xiv. 9). I hear the sound of "much people in Heaven" gathered out of 'every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue.' A chastened imagination may be free to indulge its pleasing reverie regarding these 'nations,' as well as persons "of the saved" (Rev. xix. 1; xxi. 24). Beyond "the dark hills of time," it may see a rainbow of hope spanning the distant altitudes of eternity;—this sin-stricken, woe-worn world resuming its place among restored planets,—joining in the harmonies of the glad coronation-song,

"Crown Him Lord of all."

We are safe, and abundantly within warrant, in predicating this, regarding those who have fled to Jesus for salvation;—yes, regarding the humblest, feeblest, dimmest satellite, which owns the power, the light, and life of the great Central Sun. "Christ," we read, "loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it

should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 27). "A glorious Church!" is the comment of Richard Knill,—“this expression is found but once in the Bible, and it is in connection with persons who had been great sinners. So bad, indeed, as to be styled dead in sin,—without God, and without hope in the world.” But further we are forbidden to go, in support of any human theory of final restoration. This would be trenching on the realm of the unknowable; intruding on the region which angels fear to tread. We leave others to theorise and dogmatise where the Word of God seems to observe and to inculcate the attitude of ‘mute expressive silence.’ When the Holy Oracle, indeed, *does* speak, it is not, like the Pagan oracles, in utterances of studied ambiguity, but in words of unmistakable warning; and those incur grave responsibility who would seek to minimise or modify these solemn monitions. Just as much as they err, on the other hand, who, in gloomily formulated dogmas, would listen to nothing but muffled peals and funeral bells and dirges of doom, attempting to make themselves wiser than God.

One thing, I repeat, can alone be asserted without modification or qualification; that for Christ's own people—those who are *IN HIM*, the lost moral harmonies, not only can be, but *are*, everlastingly restored and retuned. Listen to the Apostle's declaration as he stands on the living Rock of Ages, and proclaims the ground of a reconciliation that can never more be

marred or disturbed :—" And, having made peace though the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself ; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven " (Col. i. 20). " This much," observes such a safe guide as Bishop Ellicott, after warning against doing violence to revelations that carry with them their own limitations,— " this much, however, we may dare to say, but no more than this :— that all, from its union with the Saviour, is saveable, shall be saved ; all that from being one with the Restorer is capable of restoration, shall be restored ; yea, all that distinctly evinces the continued and preponderating action of the true central force shall be gathered up into the ever-blessed centre of Life and Love." ¹

We may aver further, that there is in reserve for the Redeemed an ever brightening and more glorious future. Their song is ever to increase ; to grow, as it were, in intensity and volume. At first it is heard by the seer as " a voice of a great multitude ;" deeper, as " the voice of many waters ;" deeper still, as " the voice of mighty thunderings " (Rev. xix. 6). The circles of joy are to be ceaselessly widening and expanding : though at the same time we believe the utterance of each of the glorified multitude will still be the old prayer of Paul upon earth—" that I *may* know Him." As if, after ages and cycles have rolled

¹ "Destiny of the Creature," p. 94.

by, they were only lisping the alphabet of knowledge; or, like the world's great philosopher, picking up tiny shells on the beach, while the vast ocean of truth and bliss lies undiscovered before them—"And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever" (Rev. v. 13). The refrain of the song of earth will be the refrain of the Eternal Anthem—"Of *Him* are ye IN CHRIST JESUS . . . EVEN IN HIM!"

And surely, if yet one more word may be added, it is, that it becomes our duty, as individuals and as Churches, to help on this glorious consummation, this "dispensation of the fulness of times." Be the mystery what it may, the essence of that fulness (what cannot be marred or diminished by rival theological theories and dogmas) is the glorifying of our Great Master. These "all things," material and immaterial, are IN CHRIST: and, if *in Him* ourselves, it follows, as alike our obligation and our privilege, to seek to bring others to be partakers of our joy! Both assertions seem beautifully brought out in these other words of our Apostle (2 Cor. iv. 6):—"God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts"—to do what? To keep it there? secreted, unutilised, monopolised? Nay, as the verb may be more graphically and grammatically rendered, "to give out" (not

to '*give*' merely, as in our version, but "*to give out*:" we are the moral reflectors of the Great Sun of Righteousness) "*to give out* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

"Come thou,"—may the divine words addressed of old to Noah be repeated—"Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark." It is the simplest truth in the Apostle's new 'economy,' but one that can never weary nor grow old by repetition. There is room in that Ark—there is room IN CHRIST for *all*! Different it is in things that are 'of the earth earthy.' There is room there only for the few; the rich, the gifted, the noble, the ambitious, the powerful, the successful. The vast majority are left to battle with the storm,—to mingle indiscriminately in the crowd. The many are left out in the dark, while the few favoured guests, only, troop to the festal hall.

Not so with Christ and His offered salvation. Blood for all: hope for all: grace for all: robes and crowns and palms for all. All warranted—all welcome. Oh may we, in the glorious fulness of God's own times, be at last "gathered together in *one*—EVEN IN HIM!"



XVIII.

BONDS IN CHRIST.

"My bonds IN CHRIST are manifest in all the Palace."¹

—Phil. i. 13.

" Y bonds IN CHRIST!"

Thus was Paul's monogram inscribed on the very place of his captivity.

The Apostle, when he wrote these words, was a prisoner in Rome. Not as yet immured in a dungeon; but certainly under restraint; chained to soldiers from the pretorian barracks, who kept guard over him by

¹ 'Εν ὄλῳ τῷ πραιτωρίῳ. It matters comparatively little to what the 'prætorio' strictly refers. The "royal household," as in our version (the 'Cæsar's Palace' on the Palatine of iv. 22), is the view supported by Chrysostom, Theodoret, and the Greek commentators; also, Erasmus, Beza, Grotius, Bengel, and others. Luther renders it "Richt-haus," Judgment-hall: as it is translated in Matt. xxvii. 29, &c. (Prof. Eadie *in loc.*) The meaning adopted by many recent scholars is the "Imperial barracks," or "Imperial troops" (Prætorian guard). [See the subject treated in an exhaustive dissertation by Bishop Lightfoot, (pp. 99-104).] It is possible, such is the view of one modern writer there stated, that while the reference may be (probably ought to be) to the 'body-guard,' that body-guard was itself attached to the Palace "for the protection of the Emperor, either lodged in its courts or standing sentry at its gates."—Dean Merivale's '*History of the Romans*,' vi. p. 268, quoted by *Ib.*

turns; that, too, by day and night without intermission. And ere long this 'fettered freedom' (he must have had his own premonitions), was to end in incarceration in the Mamertine.¹

At first sight, strange and sad entry is this in such a life—*Paul in bonds!* a chained and caged eagle: instead of mounting with joyous pinion up the blue heavens, exulting in the liberty with which Christ had made him free, he is found chafing and beating his wings against the enclosing bars. To all human appearance, no occurrence could be more adverse and fatal to the propagation of the Gospel. The arrest of its noblest representative and champion, might surely well be considered equivalent to defeat.

Not so! However qualified at first may have been the illustrious captive's own verdict on this unseasonable repression, he can write on a calm, mature retrospect, "The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel" (Phil. i. 12). It is the old story; the apparent reverse and discomfiture of man turned into the triumph of truth and of God; garnered mercies found hidden in provi-

¹ It is worthy of note, that the Apostle applies two different words in speaking of these "bonds." As in our motto-verse, *δεσμους*, (the same also in vers. 7, 14, 17; Philem. 10. 13; Col. iv. 18). The other, *ἐν ἀλώσει*, as in Eph. vi. 20; Acts xxviii. 20. "The latter," says Bishop Lightfoot, "seems to differ from the former, only as bringing out the idea of attachment rather than confinement . . . the word is used especially of the 'coupling-chain,' 'hand-cuff,' by which the prisoner was attached to his guard, as in the case of Agrippa. Josephus *Ant.* xviii. 6, 7, 10." —(Introduction to Philippians, p. 8.)

dential dealings, at the time dark, mysterious, untoward.

Similarly incomprehensible (to take another New Testament memory), was that weeping and wailing in the desolate home and dreary graveyard of Bethany,—the cry of bereft hearts unsuccoured in their agony. Why so sudden an eclipse of their home joys,—the deprivation of a brother beloved, and the removal of a prop so needed in the infant Church? Why, above all, the mysterious delay in the advent of the One only Being in the world who could either arrest the footsteps of the dreaded foe, or give back to the mourners their beloved dead? We hardly seem to wonder at—we dare not chide—the half-reproachful refrain—“If HE had been here our brother had not died!” But wait the Divine disclosure. What lessons of consolation have these three days of doleful watching taught the Church of Christ in every age! How our Bibles and our souls would be shorn of perhaps their most treasured solace, had that Eleventh chapter of the Fourth Evangelist never been written; or rather, had these tears of the Bethany sisters never been suffered to flow, and that weary interval to elapse! The Lord of these weepers was, by that seemingly cruel postponement of succour, really only preparing a fuller cup of consolation for them, and for mourners of all times.

So with St. Paul. Leave out his bonds from the story of his life, and we are conscious at once of irre-

parable loss. First of all, we should, in all human likelihood, have been thereby deprived of the most precious and enduring legacy he has bequeathed to the Church of the future: for not the least touching and beautiful of his inspired letters, as we well know, were indited during his Roman imprisonment. There was a meaning in the captive's words, with reference to himself and his own life-work, he did not probably contemplate in writing them—"I suffer trouble, as an evil-doer, even unto bonds: but the Word of God is *not bound*" (2 Tim. ii. 9). It was because one bow he bravely carried was broken, that we are indebted to another still spared to him;—for those "winged words"—golden arrows—which have been speeding their flight for eighteen centuries, and are speeding still. Add to this, we should have forfeited thereby a noble—the noblest chapter in the record of his own personal experience; the record of his patience and faith; the calm radiance of evening sky and golden sunset, after a day of storm and tempest. Affliction, "even unto bonds," in his case (as affliction in the case of all God's true people), evidently ripened and mellowed the saintly character,—transfiguring him, before he was glorified. Yes, it was not when he walked a free man, in busy mart, or imperial city; not on Athenian Areopagus, nor in Ephesian theatre, nor in Temple-court of Jerusalem, that he experienced the deepest consciousness (and recorded that experience) of *fellowship* with his Lord in His sufferings, and of

attaining "conformity to His death" (Phil. iii. 10). It was rather when he heard the clank of the chain which bound him to his guardsman, and afterwards gazed on damp dungeon walls, that, like the bird of night, the trill of his jubilant song, afterwards to be considered, was heard—"Rejoice IN THE LORD alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. iv. 4). He could use the emphatic symbol of another Epistle, when speaking of a similar season of trial and humiliation—"Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. xii. 9). The very soldiers who guarded him could not fail to be subdued into reverence. They saw in their prisoner no semblance of the ordinary criminal type, his hands stained with blood, and his soul with foul perfidy and dishonour. But one, strong in the maintenance of a virtuous cause,—an unimpeachable moral creed; and ready, if need be, as much as the bravest among the legions of Cæsar ever were, to suffer and die for it. They carried the story of that calm endurance to their fellow comrades in royal hall and imperial barrack, so that his "bonds in Christ" became thus "manifest in all the Palace, and in all other places."

It concerns us, however, at present, specially to note the associations of his bonds with the name of his great Lord. They are "*bonds IN CHRIST.*" "That," says Archbishop Leighton, "which the Papists fabulously say of some of their saints, that they received the

impression of the wounds of Christ in their body, is true, in a spiritual sense, of the soul of every one that is indeed a saint and believer." It was the remembrance of Christ's own bonds and sufferings which imparted strength to Paul in the endurance of his. IN HIM he had victory over obloquy and scorn, sorrow and pain. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also our consolation aboundeth by Christ" (2 Cor. i. 5). Moreover, this participation in his Lord's sufferings had its counterpart in the glory that was to follow—"We suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him."

There is one, somewhat enigmatical passage, which may not unnaturally, in connection with the present meditation, suggest itself to the reader. It is that contained in Col. i. 24: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." What can these words be supposed to mean? We may at once reply, negatively, that we know what they do *not* mean. It would be to reverse and nullify the whole teaching of the Apostle (constituting a libel on his theology), to represent him describing his afflictions as *meritorious*: being even in a qualified sense, 'factors' in "the salvation which is IN CHRIST JESUS" (2 Tim. ii. 10). Much more incongruous still would it be, with his repeated assertions, had he described any poor endur-

ances of his as forming works of supererogation in the Romish sense:—supplementing some deficiencies and shortcomings in the all-perfect and all-sufficient atoning work of his Lord, who “by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Had such been his meaning, I repeat, it would have been to unsay and repudiate the utterances of a lifetime,—to destroy what had taken him years of toil to build up,—putting the wood and the hay and the stubble, in the place of the gold, silver, and precious stones. He would most certainly have been the last to summon in the aid of miserable, inadequate, puny moral forces of his own, to buttress what he had elsewhere nobly spoken of as *THE* one, and only “POWER of God unto salvation.”

It is enough surely to say, in explanation of the verse in question, that identifying himself with his Divine Master, he willingly rejoiced in being subjected to the scoffs and buffetings—the taunts, reproaches, and contumely which had fallen on Him. While ever feeling alive to the wide, immeasurable interval which separated *his* afflictions from the far deeper and intenser ones endured by his Lord (not worthy to be named together in the same breath)—he yet rejoiced that his present experience enabled him, so far at least, to diminish that wide disparity. He gloried in anything which brought him nearer in resemblance and in fellowship to the Saviour he loved. To endure *His* cross was his highest honour, to be ‘like Him’ his noblest

aspiration. If, therefore, as one of the members of His suffering body, his afflictions brought him closer to the Lord, that approximation would be his best recompense and reward. With undissembled gladness he could say—"I rejoice in my sufferings."

But to return to the most notable lesson to be derived from the contemplation of Paul's 'bonds IN CHRIST.'

Do they not afford, in the case of God's servant, only another illustration of the great, divine law, that freedom comes out of bondage, glory comes out of suffering, death comes out of life. Nature herself proclaims and endorses this universal experience. Every spring, with its ten thousand thousand verdant lips, utters it over the fallen leaves which autumn winds have swept, and winter frosts have smitten with decay. The tiny grain-stalks which flush the early year, repeat and vivify that utterance of the gracious Teacher we previously quoted when dwelling on the same theme—"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 24). The storm which has roused the ocean into madness, and strewed its shores with wrecks, has dispersed miasma from the air, and on invisible wings driven the pestilence from our homes. The very bed of the lava stream, now furrowing the side of the burning mountain, and which once carried devastation and death in its fiery course; or

the excoriated lip of the volcano, have been seen, from a subtle application of the same law, carpeted with flowers or festooned with vines.¹ So is it with suffering, and suffering believers. Hear what the same heroic bondsman himself says as to the noblest exemplification of this law (of *life* emerging out of *death*): "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. iv. 10, 11). "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. xii. 10).

These sufferings, moreover, are not only disciplinary,—moulding into a more blessed conformity with the Prince of sufferers; but when thus meekly and uncom-

¹ "In the case of a volcanic mountain, the heat, often retained long after eruptions, is added to that of isolation, and so strengthens the wind from the valley. A German traveller, Herr Rein, has lately published some interesting observations of the way in which vegetation is distributed on the sides of volcanoes in Japan. It is continually being propagated upwards by the valley-wind conveying the ripe seeds in that direction. One of the highest mountain-chains in Japan, that of Outaké, has a ridge directed from north to east, in which are eight successive craters. The most southern is proved to be the most recent by having no vegetation, whereas the most northern and oldest is covered up to its interior walls with Arctic and Alpine plants: the charming Alpine campanula, larger and more beautiful than its European congeners, including lovely saxifrages, and very varied anemones." —*The Times*, Dec. 1879.

plainly borne, they become a self-evidencing testimony to the power and the grace of Christ. The bonds of Paul were not only manifest alike in all the Barracks and "in all the Palace," but he tells us they served to nerve and brace the drooping energies of his comrades in the fight of faith. The gracious results of trial in thus bringing into nearer fellowship and identity with Jesus, will only indeed be fully realised and manifested in the bright world where trial is unknown. We must, meanwhile, often rest satisfied that there is much in the trials themselves which are incomprehensible,—the 'why' and the 'wherefore' of which Heaven alone shall fully disclose. The day is coming, however, when many a child of earthly affliction will be able to utter, with a higher and infinitely nobler meaning—"My bonds IN CHRIST are manifest *in all the Palace.*"

It was but the other day I read, in the works of a distinguished French philosopher and orator, what I may venture, perhaps somewhat fancifully, to adopt as a beautiful and undesigned comment on these words (assuming for the time the correctness of our own Bible rendering)—"*In all the Palace*":—"We are all of us like the weavers of the Gobelinus, who, following out the pattern of an unknown artist, endeavour to match the threads of divers colours on the wrong side of the woof, and do not see the result of their labour. It is only when the texture is complete, that they can admire at their ease these lovely flowers and

figures, these splendid pictures worthy of the palaces of kings. So it is with us. We work, we suffer, and we see neither the end nor the fruit. But God sees it; and when He releases us from our task, He will disclose to our wondering gaze what He, the great Artist, everywhere present and invisible, has woven out of those toils that now seem so sterile; and He will then deign to hang up in His Palace of gold the flimsy web that we have spun.”¹

Happy those amongst us whose ‘*bonds IN CHRIST*’ are working out so glorious a consummation! The web of life, with its chameleon pattern—its strange, incomprehensible interweaving of dark and bright threads, fitted, by processes we cannot understand on earth, to be made manifest at last as an adornment in the Palace of the Great King! The weaving of the tapestried web, moreover, if we might still carry out the thought suggested by the emblem, is a slow, gradual (shall we say tedious?) process. It is not the photographic picture which is begun and finished with a flash of light: it resembles rather the hour by hour, and day by day, and month by month, of patient and laborious handicraft. This is Paul’s own exact representation of that grander tapestry which the angels of affliction are, behind scenes, busily weaving:—yea, in the quotation we have just given, which is being weaved by a Higher and Better than Angel. Hear his words: “Our

¹ *Life of Ozanam.*

light affliction," says he (others would have given it a different name), "*WORKETH* for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17). Every stitch of the hand, every turn of the shuttle, is "*working out,*" in some mysterious but very real way, God's great cartoon for the Palace halls and walls of Eternity!

Nor are our "*bonds in Christ,*" in the modern acceptance of the term, necessarily restricted to affliction in its more pronounced form, of sickness, pain, bereavement. These may resolve themselves into some iron fetter in our daily life;—something in the tear and wear of ordinary work; the bonds, it may be, of some seemingly mean and ignoble calling;—the fretting domestic care;—the petty wrong; the ungrateful recompense;—the wretched estrangement. Some of these, indeed, if the incidents of the Great Life be thought over, were the very afflictions which the Master Himself endured. Let us seek to face our bonds and crosses, as He did, in a spirit of calm submission; glorifying God in the day of visitation. Not seeking to get rid of trial;—not seeking to strip off the fetters;—not seeking to battle against the appointments of Providence, to break loose from the meanness and paltriness of our life-work and its surroundings; but rather to import into the mean and ignoble, the common and the trivial, a Christian and Christ-like spirit. Thus, meekly acquiescing in whatever the Divine ordination may be, to breathe the

prayer 'divinely taught,' of the Gethsemane agony—"Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." All trial will thus be ennobled, consecrated, sublimated;—iron fetters will become golden ones, by their being regarded and accepted as "BONDS IN CHRIST."



XIX.

ACCEPTED IN CHRIST.

“To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted IN THE BELOVED: IN WHOM we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”—Eph. i. 6, 7.

“But now, IN CHRIST JESUS, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”—Eph. ii. 13.

IN this—the most deeply experimental of St. Paul’s Epistles, how often do our eyes rest on the *replica* of his great motto! Let us enter by the gateway thus surmounted by the familiar words, and examine one or two of the sacred treasures within.

I. Note the covenant relationship—“accepted *in the Beloved*.” It is only under a new phraseology what we have already found him describing as “the new creature *in Christ Jesus*.” The soul, unlovable in itself, made lovable “in the Beloved”—“the Altogether lovely ONE” (Sol. Song v. 16). “Fair as the moon” (Sol. Song vi. 10), is one out of many figurative descriptions of the Church in its corporate capacity;

and what is true of the Church collectively, is equally true of each individual member of it.

Let us look a little more particularly at this significant symbol, as illustrative of the present topic. Whence does the moon in the heavens derive her brightness? That brightness is not inherent. On the contrary, astronomers tell us, our silvery satellite is in itself a hideous distorted mass of extinct volcanoes, from which all life and glory have departed;—a haunt of chaos and darkness,—airless, cloudless, tenantless. Whence, then, is the light derived which enables it to shine like a pendent lamp in God's midnight Sanctuary—a vestal fire in the Holy of holies of His material Temple? As is well known, it is all from *the sun*. The lesser light is bathed in the glory of the sovereign orb. Without that sun the moon would be no more than a black spot in creation.

What a picture of the believer by nature!—His heart a chaos; the home of spiritual gloom and desolation, ploughed and furrowed with the traces of sin's volcanic fires. But the Sun of Righteousness has arisen; the darkness is past; and the transfigured soul shines in His reflected glories. In a word, that soul is, "IN CHRIST," a new world, "a new creation." The summons has been given—"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isa. lx. 1). IN CHRIST, and in Christ alone, the emblematic description is verified—"fair as the moon."

The more special reference, however, in the first of our verses, seems rather to be to another favourite emblem of St. Paul's: one which forms a distinctive feature in the same sacred allegory from which the lunar symbol just spoken of, is taken. "I am black, but comely," is the portraiture there given of the Bride (Sol. Song i. 5). Comely, beautiful, glorious, through the comeliness and glory of Another. This same figure the Apostle more fully expands in the close of the Epistle. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25-27). "Oh, how wonderful," to quote the simple but perspicuous comment of a practical writer on the Epistle,— "Oh, how wonderful the union between the Lord Jesus Christ and those who believe on His name. As a husband is responsible for all the debts of his wife, Jesus is responsible for the sins of His people, and pays the mighty debt of every poor sinner that depends upon Him. As the wife is lifted up, and taken even from the meanest rank in the world, and if the husband is on a throne, she is lifted up to the rank of her husband:—so Jesus takes the sinner out of the depths of guilt and sin, clothes him with His own righteousness, and will never leave him nor forsake him, until He raises him up to

sit upon His own throne. 'He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people' " ¹ (Ps. cxiii. 7, 8). "Accepted in the Beloved," the believer's name becomes Hephzibah, "The Lord delighteth in thee" (Is. lxii. 4).

II. Our thoughts in the above texts are not only directed to the blessed mystical relationship—"accepted in Christ," but to the procuring cause of that acceptance. "IN WHOM we have *Redemption through His blood.*" "But now, IN CHRIST JESUS, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" ² (Eph. ii. 13)

The expression in the first of our verses is even stronger in the original—"In whom we have *the* (την) Redemption." Moreover, the word Redemption invariably implies 'ransom by payment.' ³ The bleating of sacrificial offerings began outside the gates of Eden;—they were heard on the heights of Ararat:—still more under the Levitical economy did these expiatory sacrifices proclaim each day, and almost each hour of the day, the great truth—"without the shedding of blood there is no remission." That whole typical economy would be an enigma:—it would resolve itself into a wasteful

¹ M'Ghee on Ephesians *in loc.*

² Let us note the precise expressions "In whom," "In Christ Jesus." Not as some who give the ungrammatical rendering of Διὰ—"through whom" or 'on account of whom.' But (ἐν ᾧ) "in"; by virtue of living union with Christ.

³ ἀπολύτρωσις. See Eadie on Ephesians, pp. 37, 38.

expenditure of life, an unwarrantable redundancy of animal suffering, had it not been for its anti-typical meaning,—the significant prefiguration of an All-perfect Sacrifice. Regarded by themselves, the wounds and cries of these expiring victims are a strange anomaly in the government of a gracious and righteous Law-giver. Why torrents of innocent blood thus staining holy altars? But, accept the theory of sin's penal consequences (the necessity of expiation by vicarious suffering, through the death of the adorable Surety), and all is explained. Christ becoming the Sponsor for His people :—"made sin *for us* : (2 Cor. v. 21). Salvation procured by the substitution and atonement of a spotless Offering, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world ;—" The Son of Man, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to *give His life a RANSOM for many*" (Matt. xx. 28). If any there be (and many such there are in these times) who cavil at this article of our faith, and pronounce it a theology 'unworthy of God':—it is for us to accept these and other cognate truths, with all their deep and profound mystery, as revealed verities :—resting satisfied with the asserted 'obligation' (a *moral* obligation arising out of the very nature and character of the Supreme), and which is thus enunciated in the Great 'Epistle of Sacrifice' —" It *became* Him, of whom are all things, and by whom are all things . . . to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. ii. 10). Antagonistic to reason we allow ; yet

it is this very doctrine, humbly and reverentially received, which has imparted comfort and peace to God's people in every age. Hear the testimony, among a thousand such, of one whose name is in all the churches: "Never," says Dr. Chalmers, "does light and peace so fill my heart, as when, like a little child, I take up the lesson that God hath laid on His own Son the iniquity of us all."

III. We have noted, in the first of our motto-verses, the *procuring* cause of our union with Christ. But the same verse enables us to go a step yet higher. It gives us what may be called the *impelling* cause:—the great "motive power" in Redemption,—"*according to the riches of His grace.*" On that cross there is engraven, in imperishable lettering, the eternal love and grace of the Father.

There was nothing in the believer to deserve such a ransom, and ransom price. No 'foreseen excellence' to recommend to the Divine favour. If "IN CHRIST" be the legend and superscription on the gateway of the spiritual temple,—*Grace* is the word inscribed on its every stone, and shaft, and lintel, and buttress,—even to "the top-stone" (Zech. iv. 7).

And as grace is the *impelling* cause on the part of God, so, we may add, is His imparted grace the *propelling* power in the heart and life and progress of His people. It is He who vouchsafes to them pardoning grace, sanctifying grace, sustaining grace, comforting grace, dying grace; grace, till grace is needed

no more, and is merged in glory. "It is the Grace of God," as one, who knew it well, expresses it, "which can enable the lame, the halt, the maimed, the blind to go through the land and possess it" (*Evans*). Of, and by themselves, God's people could never reach that possession. "These," says Christ (to repeat a well-known passage), "are *IN* the world," tempted and tossed, weak and vacillating. If nothing but their own fragile roots to grapple with, they would succumb to the first hurricane. But, speaking of Himself by the lips of one of the later prophets—"I am like a green" (evergreen) "fir-tree; from Me" (*IN ME*) "is thy fruit found" (*Hosea* xiv. 8). "*IN ME*." We may say regarding the Jehovah of the New Testament, what Bishop Reynolds says of the Jehovah of the Old, when He revealed His name to Moses as the Great I AM:—"He puts His hand to a blank, to enable His people to write under it what they will that may be for their good." "*In Whom*:"—"in the Beloved"—we have pardon, peace, joy, pity, sympathy, help, comfort, everlasting salvation. Ours in life—ours in death—ours through eternity! As the Great High Priest within the veil, and by virtue of His people's union with Him, He is the Dispenser of these heavenly blessings. "Jesus Christ," says an old divine, "is the Lord-Treasurer of heaven and earth; as Joseph in Egypt. If any one would have corn, they must go to Joseph for it; He was the rock that Moses must stand on, that the glory

of God's goodness might pass before Him." ¹ "I say not unto you," is a remarkable utterance in His own valedictory discourse, "that I shall pray the Father for you" (John xvi. 26). As if He said, 'He sees you *in Me*. He beholds your names written on My golden breastplate.' It is enough. An alternative rendering of the Psalmist's words may be taken and employed by the believer in their highest reference to the Great Intercessor:—"I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me" (or, "*carries me on His heart*").

We may only further add, that this union, the result of grace and love on the part of the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son, is sealed on the one hand by the Holy Ghost:—"IN WHOM" (Christ) "also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13). On the other, it is ratified on the part of the believer *by faith*. To use the words of Besser, "Faith, in Paul's sense of it, is the Christ-betrothed-soul's wedding-ring; the preciousness of which lies, not in the holding of it, but in Him that is held by it, *viz.*, IN *Jesus Christ*." It was the peculiar aspect and attitude of faith as set forth by St. Paul—"through faith in His blood,"—"Redemption through His blood,"—which brought him so near in loving fellowship *with Christ*. We know that, in one sense, personal communion with Jesus had not been enjoyed by him as in the case of the other Apostles

¹ Nehemiah Adams.

He had never seen His Lord save in vision. But there is a contact, closer and more real than discernment by the outer senses. Though his eye had not rested on the awful scenes of Calvary, he could say with a refined spiritual apprehension—"Jesus Christ is evidently set forth." "I am crucified with Christ." "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." *By faith* he saw the blood sprinkling of the true Paschal Lamb; as if gazing on the Divine Victim "Christ our Passover sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. v. 7).

It is the same with all who, in any lowly measure, tread in the footsteps of the Great Apostle, and are heirs to that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the "confidence" of things not seen. "Accepted in the Beloved" is faith's assurance now. "In whom we have Redemption through His blood," faith's note of triumph. And when these glorious espousals shall be consummated on the Bridal-day of the Church triumphant, that same redemption-note of earth will be continued as the everlasting "*Epithalamium*"—the song of Infinite love, the song of Eternity—"Thou wast slain, and hast REDEEMED us to God by Thy blood!"



XX.


THE PEACE OF GOD IN CHRIST.

“So stand fast **IN THE LORD**, my dearly beloved.”—Phil. iv. 1.

“I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind **IN THE LORD**.”—Phil. iv. 2.

“Rejoice **IN THE LORD** alway: and again I say, Rejoice.”—Phil. iv. 4.

“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds **IN CHRIST JESUS**.”—Phil. iv. 7.

 **T**HERE is a wonderful reiteration of the Apostle's favourite monogram and its equivalents, in this concluding chapter of his Epistle to the Philippians. Though already alluded to in an earlier page, we need make no apology in recurring to these more fully now: and the above four motto-verses, which we may profitably link together, do not, as we shall afterwards find, exhaust the list. In the last of these verses, by that same unaccountable departure from the ordinary rendering previously referred to, the preposition (*ev*) has been translated in our authorised version '*through*' Christ, instead of, as elsewhere, '*in*' Christ. A similar unnecessary divergence,

as we shall note in a subsequent meditation, occurs both in verses 13 and 19.

The transition, in the opening of the chapter, is a marked and beautiful one from the immediately preceding context, where we have the strange and unwonted reference to *Paul in tears* (chap. iii. 18). His heroic soul could willingly bear any personal suffering and degradation; but at the manifestation of hostility or disloyalty to his dear Lord, covert or open, his magnanimity gave way. He could not refrain from weeping, when he thought of "the enemies of the cross of Christ;"—those who, professing outwardly the tenets of the Gospel, remained empty formalists—utter strangers to its spiritualising power; nay, dishonouring its pure and elevated morality with shameless and corrupted lives,—absorbed in 'earthly things.' He turns with a feeling of relief and gladness to the members of his much-loved Church in Philippi, who (different from many other communities he had planted) he knew were faithful to their Great Master. Their "citizenship was in heaven." They were the chartered heirs and denizens of a nobler commonwealth than "the present evil world;" they were looking and longing for their Lord's second coming (chap. iii. 20), when body as well as spirit would be transformed into a blessed resemblance with His own glorious and glorified body (ver. 21). They had already proved to him on earth, and would, in a nobler and loftier sense prove in heaven, "a royal diadem in the hand of his

God." Heaping one endearing epithet on another,—with a yearning, loving tenderness, the outpouring of a full heart that has no parallel in his other letters,—he exhorts his "brethren, dearly beloved and longed for;" his "joy and crown," to "stand fast in the Lord." *Stand fast*: a military term; and not the only one, as we shall presently see, employed by him in this chapter. Christ is represented as a glorious Fortress—"The Tower of David, builded for an armoury" (Sol. Song iv. 4), the true City of Refuge. The Apostle entreats his loved Philippian disciples to permit nothing to entice from its walls, and thus imperil their safety and peace. He exhorts them, as sentries, to stand firm at the post of duty: or, as a regiment, to stand fast in the day of battle in loyal devotion to the Great Captain of Salvation. Through their exceptionally cordial acceptance of the Gospel message, he felt as if a laurel-wreath or oaken garland, better than that of the successful athlete of Isthmia or Corinth, had been put around his brow. But, lest any breath of sin or apostacy might threaten to mar its beauty, or soil its verdure;—lest some moment of unvigilance should lull them to sleep and indifference;—or worse, lead them to stray from the watch-tower and parley with the foe; the exhortation just quoted is employed. "Look not to me," he seems to say, "or to any human instrument: stand fast *in the Lord!*" It recalls a passage in which, with a still deeper emphasis, the same phrase is used. Here he speaks of their stead-

fastness being his *joy*: there he calls it his very *life*. "Now we *live, if ye stand fast* IN THE LORD" (1 Thess. iii. 8). Similarly in another Epistle—"Finally, my brethren, be strong IN THE LORD, and in the power of His might. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Eph. vi. 10, 13).

In the Church, however, which, of all he had founded, had given him least cause for disquietude and trouble (on the contrary, which had all along afforded the most indubitable proofs of affection and esteem), there was one darkening cloud in its otherwise bright sky. Two female members (whose services, moreover, in aiding him to spread the Gospel he gratefully recognises in Phil. iv. 3) had been involved in one of those unhappy estrangements, which so often mar the beauty and harmony of the imperfect fellowships below. We are not informed what the cause of disagreement was, nor from what it had arisen. Perhaps from the too common one of rivalry and partisanship; some miserable question about precedence, and its usual accompaniment—a lack of generous forbearance. Very possibly an allusion to the cause is referred to in Phil. ii. 3:—"Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves;" and where, as the best counteractive to such an unworthy spirit, there is held up the peerless example of Him who

stooped to a servant's place, and was willing to become the lowliest of the lowly:—"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii. 5). The Apostle would seek to effect the needed reconciliation. How does he endeavour to repair this unseemly breach? Again his monogram is enlisted in the office of peacemaker. He makes a personal appeal:—"I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind IN THE LORD." After all, this he fondly hoped was only a passing cloud; and again he returns to the jubilant term employed in the beginning of chapter iii., coupled with a reduplication of his favourite word—"Rejoice IN THE LORD alway, and again I say, Rejoice"¹ (Phil. iv. 4). "In the Lord," was the secret of the *alway* rejoicing; the source of its reality, its intensity, and permanence. It was joy resultant from a living union with a living Saviour. Hence not a fitful spasmodic joy, but deep, lasting, continuous. Not the ripple of the shallow brook gurgling over its pebbly bed, but the calm, steady, silent flow of the river in its well-worn channel, too deep to be noisy. Paul had been himself the partaker and recipient of that joy, a joy in the Lord 'alway;'—the habitually realised presence and fellowship of his Redeemer; a growing

¹ 'Rejoice': 'Joy be with you.' It is the same Greek word employed by the Saviour in His own memorable Resurrection-greeting—"All hail!" (Matt. xxviii. 9). So that the Apostle's "Rejoice in the Lord," was in one sense only a translation and echo of his great Master's Easter salutation.

consciousness of the reality and security of that divine fortress within whose walls he had fled for safety. With this glowing and growing assurance of personal tranquillity and gladness of heart, he would have others share the inner sunshine—"Again I say, Rejoice."

Two exhortations follow, which, as they have no immediate connection with his monogram, we need not dwell upon: *viz.*, the avoidance of feverish *carefulness* on the one hand, and the cultivation of abundant *prayerfulness* on the other. But as he sums up, the familiar term once more occurs as the culminating expression of the paragraph:—"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep" (as a citadel or garrison is kept and defended by a military guard) "your hearts and minds IN CHRIST JESUS" (Phil. iv. 7). Here again, observe it is the warrior or sentinel symbol which is employed:—a somewhat singular application of the metaphor as applied to "*Peace*." The heart, the mind, the will, the thoughts, the feelings, the affections, are "IN CHRIST;" shut up as in a fortress; and God's own '*Peace*'—the gentlest of sentries—keeps watch and ward at the gates of this all-glorious stronghold. Paul, when he wrote the words, had, as we recently noted, his hand fastened by a chain to the soldier at his side; thereby ensuring his safe custody. May not this possibly have suggested the simile? '*The peace of God*' (personified) says he, 'like that guardsman from Cæsar's barracks, will

hold you in safe keeping,—only the golden fetters of God's sweet peace will be substituted for the iron ones of man's galling and cruel power'!

And what a peace must this be "IN CHRIST JESUS," which the Apostle here describes as "passing all understanding"! Let us for a moment go round about this fortress thus garrisoned and sentinelled, and mark its bulwarks. As its foundation there is, as we found in the preceding chapter, the assurance of *pardon*: "IN WHOM we have redemption through His blood, even the *forgiveness of sins*." IN HIM the mighty, all-momentous question of our soul's everlasting interests is settled and adjusted for ever: so that once within these walls, we are eternally safe. Then, even as regards the present,—that union with Jesus enables us to repose in the gladdening conviction, that our path of life is meted out for us and appointed; that it is not an arbitrary destiny, but a *plan of God*. We have the bliss of that Saviour's unseen but real fellowship on earth;—His unseen, but real advocacy in heaven; the pledge that no true evil can befall us; that the sting has been extracted from trial, and the last enemy robbed of his victory. No wonder then, with these as its leading characteristics, that the Apostle should call it a peace which baffles finite comprehension. No plummet-line can fathom it, no tempest can assail it, no time can destroy it: "Its foundations are in the Holy mountains." Away, then, with all disquietudes, all misgivings and forebodings. "Thou wilt

keep him," O Saviour God, "in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed ON THEE, because he trusteth IN THEE" (Isa. xxvi. 3).

Yes, "IN CHRIST JESUS." Hear how the Divine Redeemer, in bequeathing that peace, does Himself, so to speak, anticipate the *monogram* of this greatest Apostle—"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John xiv. 27) ; "These things I have spoken unto you that IN ME ye might have peace" (John xvi. 33). No wonder that in wandering through the Roman Catacombs, the eye should fall on the Christian's expressive trilogy—SPES · PAX · TIBI (Hope · Peace · To thee).



IN PACE.

XXI.

STRENGTH AND RICHES IN CHRIST.

"I can do all things IN CHRIST which strengtheneth me."—
Phil. iv. 13.

"But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches
in glory IN CHRIST JESUS."—Phil. iv. 19.

IN the verse which formed the subject of our last meditation, we found that our excellent Bible translators had unaccountably employed the preposition "through," instead of the more literal one of "in."

In the above two verses which follow in the same postscript-chapter, there is a similar departure from the translation of other passages. In both cases, however, we have ventured to restore the rendering, so that each may take its place, as it ought, among the monogram-mottoes of the Great Apostle.¹

They both occur in connection with a tribute of

¹ Phil. iv. 13. Πάντα ἰσχύω ἐν τῷ (in Him). The Χριστῷ in the Received text is not found in versions of highest authority. "But the reference is unmistakeable; and the omission of the name gives a peculiar point to the starting declaration."—Dr. Eadie *in loco*.

grateful acknowledgment paid to the beloved Philippian Church, for what they had done on his behalf in a season of constrained silence and inactivity. By the hands, too, of the faithful Epaphroditus, they had sent him substantial tokens of their sympathy and affection. He received these, as he received everything, "IN CHRIST." "I rejoiced *in the Lord* greatly" (ver. 10). *In the Lord* the gift was given. *In the Lord* the gift, with a thankful heart, is accepted. With the courtesy and delicacy of a noble mind, he is fearful, lest in the very act of acknowledgment, his words and feelings may have been misapprehended. He may have conveyed the impression of indulging in a querulous and complaining spirit, hinting at wants, and chafing under penury. To have done so would have been alien to his nature. A sufficient and ample refutation truly was his whole past disinterested life. He takes, however, the special opportunity of assuring them that he was not one thus to repine under straits and fret under discouragements. His new '*life in Christ*' had enabled him, with calm and cheerful equanimity, to rise superior to the mere 'accidents' of existence. Whether it be 'abasement or abounding,' indigence or fulness, an embittered lot or outward prosperity, he was alike content in the sovereign, all-gracious will of Him who regulated his chequered history. His, at the same time, was no sullen, stoical acquiescence in a hard, but hopeless fate. Indeed, even in the very conveyance of this assurance of his content-

ment, we may note a beautiful testimony to his humility: "I have *learned*," he says, "in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." It is a frank avowal that he had, by nature, a mind as prone to impatience as others;¹ that it was with struggle and self-discipline he had schooled himself into this "calm and heavenly frame." In a word, that its root and secret were not in himself. His IN CHRISTO solves it all. 'I can face all things, and do all things, and suffer all things, *in Christ, who strengtheneth me.*'²

That 'fortress' (to recur to the symbol of the previous meditation) was full of all manner of store. It contained the 'panoply of God.' He was "*strong in the Lord*, and in the power of His might." He was strong for duty; he was strong for (what to him was perhaps more difficult than duty) restraint and inaction. He had "*learned*" that hardest lesson of *strength*. "Their

¹ Barnes.

² The same Greek word is employed several times by him, as in 1 Tim. i. 12—"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath *enabled* me," infused strength into me, "inspired me with strength." (See Lightfoot on Philippians, p. 164.) As the Apostle's monogram has suggested many references to the Roman Catacombs, it may be worth while, in connection with this verse, to refer to another frequent hieroglyph there found, and one which seems to have shared with the chrism a special favouritism with the early Christians. Indeed, the two are often combined. It is the symbol of *the fish*:—and this, at first sight singular partiality, is readily understood and accounted for from the explanation given by Augustine. The initial letters of the Greek word for fish (ΙΧΘΥΣ) read as an acrostic—*Ιησους Χριστος Θεου Υιος Σωτηρ*,—"Jesus Christ God's Son Saviour." Thus, to use the words of that ancient Father, "the name of Christ is mystically designated."

Moreover, this symbol is sometimes still further significantly con-

strength is to *sit still*" (Isa. xxx. 7). A noble testimony he adds, in a succeeding verse, to this same contentment in Christ. To others, what must he have appeared to be? Indeed, what *was* he? A prisoner; his liberty curtailed; his energies cramped. No longer permitted, as the freeman, to bound at will over the waves of the Great Sea, or to foot the passages of the Pisidian Alps; to join the Sabbath prayer-meeting by the Philippian river-side; to grapple with subtle intellects in the bazaars of Corinth, or in the Athenian Agora. Now, even when he tells the cherished story of the cross, he is subjected to jealous espionage. The clank of the chain mingles with the silvery accents of his voice. Yet, what is his testimony and avowal? what the manifesto of one who never spoke but in words of truth and soberness? "*I have all and abound*" (Phil. iv. 18). A beautiful and succinct comment on these, his present (indeed on his habitual) feelings, is con-

joined with others; e.g., not on slabs, but on rings and seals, a lamb is represented as standing on the back of the fish:—the weak believer supported by Christ. Or, of similar import, a ship or galley—the Christian symbol of the Church—is represented as borne through "the waves of this troublesome world" on the same figurative fish. It is the believer individually, as well as the Church collectively, riding out the storm, and reaching the heavenly port in safety, through and in the strengthening and sustaining power of "*Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Saviour.*" We have reason to know, from Clement of Alexandria, that this symbol was familiar in the second century. Indeed, De Rossi clearly shows, by painstaking investigation, that it was one peculiar to the very earliest age, and is rarely found subsequent to the time of Constantine. (See former books of reference. Also, an excellent compendium, "The Catacombs of Rome," *passim*.)

tained in Col. i. 11: "Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."

But to pass to the other memorable entry at the head of this meditation.

What can be his recompense to his beloved Philipians for all their generous deeds; and—better to the truly great soul than deeds—the tender affectionate solicitude and sympathy which evoked and inspired them?

He feels he can give at least no personal return or equivalent. He was powerless as a little child! Even when in the enjoyment of liberty and independent action, his hands ministered to his own necessities.¹ What can he do now? How can he shape now his acknowledgment and reply? His monogram furnishes and dictates the message. 'I can give nothing back; I can send nothing back,' he seems to say. "Silver and gold have I none:"—nevertheless, the cup of cold water will not go unrewarded. I look away from my poor self to the Great Recompenser—"But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory IN CHRIST JESUS" (Phil. iv. 19). The cloud you have loaded will descend in sure blessings on your heads.' He remembered the words of the Lord Jesus how He said—"Inasmuch as ye have done

¹ Acts xx. 34.

it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matt. xxv. 40).

A beautiful contrast has been noted in the pronoun here employed—"My God." 'You have generously met and supplied all *my* wants, ministering to me in my distress; God, on my behalf, will return the boon. As ye have been *my* helpers, God will be yours. Once and again ye sent unto *my* necessity. He will befriend you by supplying "all your need." Yes, and in a way I never could. My best recompensing blessings, even if I had them to give, would be limited, temporary. His are inexhaustible. And, better still, they are "riches in glory;"—recompense beyond the bounds of earth.¹ And all 'IN CHRIST JESUS.' That is the climax: here, as elsewhere, giving value, and security, and permanence:—the divine secret of that illimitable supply.

The unfallen angels are as dependent as we are on God's bounty. Direct from Him they receive every blessing. They can appropriate the first part of the verse—"My God shall supply all your need out of His riches;" but it is the sinner, redeemed by the blood of the divine Surety,—he who has his privileges and immunities ensured and guaranteed by covenant, who alone can lay claim to the wealth of meaning in the concluding words—"In glory IN CHRIST JESUS." His are the illimitable gifts and legacies of

¹ "Πληρώσει ἐν δόξῃ seems to be a pregnant phrase, signifying 'shall supply, by placing you in glory.'"—Lightfoot, note, p. 167.

grace,—each of which has, in the words of the old writers, ‘the mark of the cross upon it,—the badge and pledge of inviolability.

How often has the experience of Paul been borne out in that of His true followers in every age! In circumstances where poor, frail humanity reeled and staggered : in battles of the faith, or battles of the soul, where there seemed nothing but failure, defeat, discomfiture; how wondrously has upholding, sustaining, conquering grace been vouchsafed! Is it some evil habit, some secret sin, some debasing propensity, some grovelling appetite and passion to subdue? *In Christ* he has been strengthened. Is it some life-long affliction to bear—reverses in fortune, wearing, wasting disease and sickness, breaches in the loved circle; or, what is harder still, some of life’s unspoken sorrows, the hidden wound of the lacerated heart? *In Christ* he has been strengthened. Is it some painful or perilous duty to encounter or discharge—from which flesh and blood recoil, but which some dire necessity of circumstance renders imperative? *In Christ* he has been strengthened. Is it some unforeseen assault of the evil one, the presentation of ‘the tempting opportunity:’—one footstep more, conscience shipwrecked and peace bartered? *In Christ* he has been and he will be strengthened. Yes! beautiful is this promise of grace for every recurring exigency. The supply, not of one want, but of all wants. Grace, too, given, not in anticipation of the trial or the temptation, but

when these come, it is meted out in loving proportion to our needs. "My God *shall* supply." It is like the Physician watching his patient, and ready to give the restorative or counteractive as these may be required—"As thy day is, so shall thy strength be." Teaching us, thereby, not to dishonour God, or to perplex ourselves, with uneasy forebodings and apprehensions as to the unravelled and unrevealed future; but to trust Him, that in the right time and in the right way the want will be supplied, or the difficulty solved, or the heart-ache soothed—"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Cor. ix. 8). Think as soon of exhausting the ocean, as of exhausting that infinite, divine supply. Millions of His children have come, and are coming, as needy suppliants; and still, over the portico of the Paternal dwelling gleam the words—"There is bread enough in your Father's house, and to spare!" To quote an old Scotch divine on this passage—"There is a kind of omnipotency in a believer being supported by Christ's strengthening power; so that there is nothing within the compass of his Christian calling, and for which there is a covenant-promise for through-bearing,—there is no such thing impossible for Him to do:—'I am able to do *all things*.'"¹

One other thought, suggested by these two previous

¹ Fergusson of Kilwinning, 1656; p. 323.

meditations. We have surely here brought before us, in the testimony and experience of St. Paul, the *joyful* element of the religion of Jesus. If "IN CHRIST" be the keynote, "joy" is the refrain of this whole chapter—this whole Epistle—"Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice." It may be otherwise counterfeited and misrepresented; but Christianity is, or ought to be, the religion of *joy*. Compare it with the teachings of the great sages and masters of antiquity,—leaders in the schools of Pagan thought. How their boasted philosophic systems pale into dead ashes beside these glowing embers in the writings of St. Paul! The one is like a sluggish pool, a cold, dreary, moorland tarn, compared with the rush and sparkle of a pure, life-giving stream, whose banks all along its course are carpeted with verdure, and bathed in sunshine—"The JOY of the Lord is your *strength*" (Neh. viii. 10).

Appropriate and beautiful, as a close, seem the words of the Apostle at the end of this Epistle to the Philippians; a doxology to God, a salutation to His saints—"Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Salute every saint IN CHRIST JESUS" (iv. 20, 21).



XXII.

RIGHTEOUSNESS IN CHRIST.

“That we might be made the righteousness of God **IN HIM**”—
2 Cor. v. 21.

“And be found **IN HIM**.”—Phil. iii. 9.

“**I****N HIM**”—clothed in the robe of His imputed righteousness, so that the eye of a holy God in looking upon us can see “neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing” (Eph. v. 27).

That is a truth, like some others, discarded in modern theology. It is, nevertheless, one of those divine verities, which, unless we wrest language from its plainest meaning, is everywhere alike implied and asserted in Sacred Scripture. Listen to the utterances of three representative Seers of the Old Testament—Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel. “Surely, shall one say, ‘*In the Lord* I have righteousness’” (Isa. xlv. 24); “I will greatly rejoice *in the Lord*, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with

her jewels" (Isa. lxi. 10). "This is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our righteousness" (Jer. xxiii. 6). "To finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness" (Dan. ix. 24). The best and loftiest of inspired Hebrew poetry celebrates the same theme. If "the King's daughter," in the 45th Psalm (the nuptial ode of a Greater than Solomon), be regarded as symbolising angelic hosts; peerless among them stands "the Queen in gold of Ophir" (Ps. xlv. 9).

That key-note, thus struck by the prophets and minstrels of the Old Testament, has its cadences prolonged and multiplied in the Gospel Age. Hear our own Apostle—"As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (Rom. v. 19). The whole Epistle of the Romans, indeed, is a sublime unfolding of the same theme. The righteousness of Christ is the jewel of that most precious casket,—the kernel of that "creed of creeds." "I am ready," is the opening sentence of the Roman letter, "to *preach the Gospel*: . . . FOR, therein is THE *Righteousness* of God revealed" (chap. i. 15-17). In the unfolding of that revelation he begins with a demonstration of the proposition—"There is none righteous, no, not one;" and having established, by an array of irrefragable proofs, the humiliating assertion,—he proceeds to disclose the great end of "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful

flesh" (chap. viii. 3), "that *THE Righteousness* of the law might be fulfilled in us" (chap. viii. 4). Thus, "as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (chap. v. 18). With his loved monogram before him, he can elsewhere tersely sum up the glorious truth—"But of Him are ye IN CHRIST JESUS, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). "Jacob," says old Thomas Brooks, "got the blessing in the garment of his elder brother. So, in the garment of Christ's righteousness, who is our Elder Brother, we obtain the blessing, yea all spiritual blessings "*in Him!*"

Is it not that same imputed robe, too, which forms the central point in the matchless parable of our blessed Lord? Before either the ring of adoption, or the shoes of liberty were spoken of, the command to the attendant menials is—"Bring forth the *best robe* and put it on him" (Luke xv. 22). The old ragged raiment of the wanderer is removed, and underneath that 'best robe' (the choicest of the wardrobe) every scar, and blain, and blemish reminding of the 'far country,' is concealed from view.

The gracious lips which uttered the gracious truth in a parabolic form on earth, thus addressed His Ephesian Church from His throne in glory. Under the significant Oriental figure (which we have already referred to in

our opening chapter), of a heavenly merchantman with goodly treasures,—costly wares, going from street to street, and from door to door, knocking for admission, He sets forth alike the righteousness that is awaiting, and the righteousness that is provided—“And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me *gold* tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed” (Rev. iii. 17, 18).

Hear, yet again, our Apostle, when he was drawing nigh to the close of his great life, how fondly and lovingly he clings to this sheet-anchor in the gathering storm. The exhortations he had given to others in the past—“Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. xiii. 14); “Having on the breastplate of righteousness” (Eph. vi. 14), he addresses to himself now. In that glorious garment and panoply he will wrap himself, and so pass unscathed through the swellings of Jordan. “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of *righteousness*, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day” (2 Tim. iv. 8). Yes, “*that day*” had its most luminous glories associated with the same transcendent truth—the robe of righteousness, the clothing of wrought gold—“That I may win Him, and be found IN HIM, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. iii. 8, 9).

What was Paul's anticipated glory in "the Day of appearing" has been that of Christ's people in every age. At the supreme moment, when the trump of the Archangel shall sound, and the dead small and great shall be sisted at the great assize, the loved and familiar strain of earth will thrill with a new and grander significance—

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

Will not the wail of 'Eden lost,' only with an altered and more glorious meaning, become the first utterance in Eden restored—"I heard Thy voice, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I *hid* myself!" Hid thyself! where? "I am found IN HIM:"—"A Man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest" (Isa. xxxii. 2). Nay, when the opened Books of Judgment are closed, when the redeemed multitude which no man can number are seen thronging (like ministering Levites, each in their appointed places) the Heavenly Temple;—and when, in that place of undefined glory where, interweaved, are the figures of Temple and Palace, Priest and King (Rev. vii.), the question is represented as being asked by Angel Spectators—"What are these arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" The reply is, "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 13, 14). That radiant, blissful assemblage will be like Israel at the Exodus, in the borrowed jewels with which they

marched out of Egypt and entered Canaan, "earrings of gold, and chains and bracelets of silver." The old words of earth will form the refrain of the Eternal anthem—"Made the righteousness of God IN HIM." "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun" (*in the Sun*) "in the kingdom of their Father" ¹ (Matt. xiii. 43).

One other query is naturally suggested ere we close. Is that Righteousness easily procurable?—is it within reach—accessible? Listen on this point also to the

¹ In these our days, when this doctrine of imputed righteousness is, with not a few, decried, it is well to turn to some of the Great Lights of bygone centuries, and see how resolutely they clung to it as a foundation-article in their creed. Hear the words of *Luther*: "What gives peace to the conscience is, that by faith our sins are no more ours but Christ's, on whom God hath laid them all; and that, on the other hand, all Christ's righteousness is ours, to whom God hath given it. Christ lays His hand upon us and we are healed. He casts His mantle upon us and we are clothed." What says so reliable an authority as *Richard Hooker*? "The righteousness wherein we must be found, if we will be justified, is not our own; therefore we cannot be justified by any inherent quality. Christ hath merited righteousness for as many as are found in Him. *In Him* God findeth us, if we be faithful, for by faith we are incorporated into Him. Then, although in ourselves we be altogether sinful and unrighteous, yet even the man, which in himself is full of sin, being found in Christ through faith, and having his sin in hatred through repentance, him God beholdeth with a gracious eye, putting away his sin, by not imputing it; taking quite away the punishment due thereunto by pardoning it, and accepteth him in Jesus Christ as perfectly righteous as if he had fulfilled all that is commanded him in the law. I must take heed what I say, but the Apostle saith, 'God made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.' God hath made Himself the sin of man, and men are made the righteousness of God." "A soul," says *Gurnall*, "castled within these walls, is impregnable, God cannot see the sinner, because Christ hides him."

Apostle's own expression, in his own comforting assurance—"It is nigh thee" (Rom. x. 8). In the same graphic passage he further asserts, that the Provider of that righteousness in offering it, mocks with no impossibility; as if its attainment demanded scaling the heights of heaven or descending to the depths beneath (Rom. x. 6, 7). "I bring near my righteousness," is God's part. Acceptance by faith is ours. "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom. iii. 22). "It is by becoming one with Christ, that Christ's righteousness can become our righteousness" (*Lightfoot*). "Thus," has it been well remarked, "the very perfection of God which seemed to close the door, is the very perfection that opens it to a poor sinner coming through Jesus" (*Harrington Evans*).

Some ancient warriors had their shields embossed, outside and in, with figures of their particular gods. With these they covered their head in the day of battle; and the intervention of the hallowed symbol (on which their eye rested) between them and the missiles of the foe, nerved their own arm in the thickest of the fight. "Behold, O God our shield," exclaims the believer in the midst of the spiritual conflict, as the Apostle's monogram gleams engraven on the shield of faith,—“Behold, O God our SHIELD, and look upon the face of Thine Anointed” (Ps. lxxxiv. 9).

Accept, then, the glorious verity in all its fulness, as your alone security now, and your only safety

and security on "*that day*." Destitute of that righteousness—'*out of Christ*'—you are like the bird, building its nest on the precarious bough. It may appear secure: but the ringing axe of the woodman sooner or later is heard at the root; and driven from the havoc of its dismantled home, it goes screaming through the forest with the tale of its woe. IN CHRIST, on the other hand, you are like the bird which builds in the recess of the ocean-cliff. Boiling, seething caldrons may be at its base: the death-shriek from some bark, with its drowning crew grappling with the storm, may be heard below: the unavailing boom of the gun of distress dies away, unsuccoured and unresponded to, amid the wail of the tempest. But, up in the niche of that beetling precipice, all is safe. There the most timid of the winged tribes can nestle with folded wing—"He shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks" (Isa. xxxiii. 16). No axe can touch it:—no blow can shiver it:—no prowler's hand can pillage it:—the wild wind cannot sway it: the spent spray cannot reach it. "Oh my dove, who art *in* the clefts of the Rock" (Sol. Song ii. 14). "Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is" (marginal rendering) "the ROCK OF AGES!"

IN HOC VINCES



N

XXIII.

COMPLETE IN CHRIST.

"Ye are complete IN HIM."—Col. ii. 10.

TO comprehend fully the bearing of the Apostle's monogram in connection with these words, we require to advert to the circumstances in which the Epistle from which they are taken was written, and the peculiar phase of erroneous doctrine that Epistle was designed to counteract and condemn.

The meaning of the writer can hardly be understood and appreciated without somewhat of a departure from the practical treatment of the themes of this Volume. It will require more than a passing and casual allusion to those strange phenomena of religious thought current during Paul's lifetime and ministry. What was better known and more fully developed in a subsequent age as *Gnosticism*, with its pernicious leaven, was already at work with special activity in the Church of Colosse and the group of sister Churches in Asia Minor. It is difficult, in a few words, to state what the scope and nature really was of this outgrowth of Oriental mysticism. It was of a curiously complex

acter; compounded of dreamy speculation, rigid
icism, and arrogant exclusiveness. Its funda-
al tenet was the impossibility of reconciling the
acter of a holy, righteous, and loving God, with
existence of evil in the world. In order, there-
to sever the Supreme Deity from complicity with
the votaries of the system made all sin to be
ent in matter. They held that God, through
spiritual nature, could have no connection what-
with gross and corporeal things. It will be seen
glance that the system was thus, so far, a
fication or expansion of the peculiar Pagan doc-
of two principles—Good and Evil, Light and
ness. The Divine Being, the “First Father” or
od Principle,” they supposed to reside in a region
fty elevation and abstraction, called the “*PLEROMA*,”
fulness of inaccessible light,” from which alone He
l give forth His decrees. He had the further
of *Bythos* or ‘The Unfathomable,’ denoting the
ery that enshrouded Him in the ‘*abyss*’ in which
welt. From this *pleroma* there issued forth, “like
as from a sound,” emanations (*æons*); an inter-
ate race of spiritual beings, or races, occupying
entric circles in the *pleroma*. By means of one of
æons, inferior to the rest (even his name is given,
iurgus), the world was created out of pre-existing
er (*Hyle*) after the form of an ideal which had
ed from Eternity in the mind of the Great Father.
the sluggish, inert mass from which it sprang being

But these doctrines, after all, were little else than a web of plausible and sophistical assumptions ; engendering deceit and self-righteousness, and completely obscuring the glory and beauty of the Gospel 'plan of salvation.'

For in order to have a yet further adequate understanding of the Apostle's references, we must not omit their views regarding the Person of Christ. These, like most religious errors, had, too, a semblance of truth in them, but only a semblance. He was considered to be the highest of the æons ; and that, after dwelling with the Great Father in the *pleroma*, he was sent down to earth in order to remedy the evil existing in creation. Others amongst them appear to have held, that this delegated æon only descended on the man Jesus at His baptism. In either case Christ was commissioned to reveal a knowledge of the true God ; and thus to reclaim some higher natures among the race of men who had been led astray by the evil principle (or Demiurgus).

I need hardly add, however, that notwithstanding this apparent recognition of the divine mission of Jesus of Nazareth, there was virtually a supercession of His claims, as the One Mediator, by this throng of subordinate ones. These latter differed from the angels on the ladder of the Jewish patriarch, in that they utterly obscured the ladder itself ; or rather Him whom the ladder symbolised. The atoning work of the cross was altogether left out. It was the

vision of the Temple seraphim without the altar and mercy-seat.

The Apostle sets himself to vindicate the Person and work of his dear Lord against all that cumbrous system of angelic emanation—"science" (*Gnosticism*) "falsely so called" (1 Tim. vi. 20). In the opening chapter of this Epistle to the Colossians, he depicts Him as the Eternal, Self-existent One. No mere intermediate æon—no, nor the first of æons—the head of these graduated ranks, "thrones and dominions and principalities and powers;" but in Him all are concentrated. "In whom dwelleth all the fulness" (*pleroma*) "of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 9). With an absolute unchallenged control, His spiritual empire extends alike over the material and moral; the domain of matter—the domain of spirit, from its highest heights to its deepest depths; so that in His divine personality He was the only true and veritable *Pleroma* alike of the earlier Platonic and this later Gnostic philosophy. "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist: and He is the head of the body, the Church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence: for it pleased the Father, that IN HIM should all fulness" (*pleroma*) "dwell" (Col. i. 16-19).

He was the Great, the only, Reconciler of "things in earth and things in heaven" (Col. i. 20). "By the blood of the cross," and the plenitude of His atoning work, He accomplished what myriads of æons—this alleged plurality of mediators—never could; opening up by His one all-sufficient sacrifice a way of pardon and acceptance—God's way to the sinner and the sinner's way to God. 'Come,' our Apostle may be supposed to say (if we may be allowed for a moment to paraphrase his meaning) in addressing those imperilled by these sophistries—"Come; and I shall unfold to you the true 'Wisdom': even Him "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. "And this I say lest any man should beguile you with enticing words" (Col. ii. 3, 4). 'We indeed,' he seems further to aver, 'are in one sense *Gnostics*:'—votaries of these esoteric doctrines. We dare not disguise that in the revelation of the Christ we believe in and love, we have a '*mystery*'—THE '*Great Mystery of godliness*—God manifest in the flesh' (1 Tim. iii. 16); "The mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ" (Col. ii. 2). "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (1 Cor. ii. 7).

But, away with all superficial, imaginary barriers between the soul and God:—all intermediate agencies; all carnal ordinances, all distinctions of meats, all washings and lustrations, all assertion of exclusive

privilege and religious *caste*. "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Col. ii. 16, 17). "Christ hath blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross" (Col. ii. 14). The Pleroma or Plenitude, groped after by the dreamy mystic, has its ideal and realisation in "the Image of the Invisible God—the first-born of every creature" (Col. i. 15); the true Light, with whom is no darkness at all. "Ye are complete IN HIM."¹

Surely one, if not the main, great lesson to be derived from the whole scope of the Apostle's teaching, as we have endeavoured to unfold and explain it in the light of our motto-verse, is the necessity of jealously guarding against aught that would interfere with our unwavering trust in Christ, and our acceptance of the one only method of salvation in Him. Gnosticism is at work in a thousand subtle forms in our fallen nature. The æons of these early dreamers have their reproduction, in proteus shape, in every era of the Church. In the present age, specially so under the two representative phases of Romanism and Ration-

¹ Various learned works might be mentioned where the doctrines of the Gnostics are fully treated and explained. In none more so than Bishop Lightfoot's commentary, with its dissertation on "the Colossian Heresy" and its excursus on *Pleroma*. See note, at end of Preface to this Volume, with extract from same.

alism, corruptions *of* the truth and substitutions *for* the truth. The former what, for lack of another term, may be called "Ecclesiasticism," with its feasts and fasts, priestly absolution, sacramentarian efficacy, sacerdotal exclusiveness, and party shibboleth. The latter in the not less insidious garb of false dogma, doctrinal error and defection :—the æons of Reason asserting their unauthorised mission from some *pleroma*-sphere of their own, unrevealed and unauthenticated in God's Holy Word, with unworthy humanitarian views of the Person of Christ, and inadequate views of His atoning work ; desecrating the refined gold of God's own sanctuary with daubs of untempered mortar. These, and other cognate forms that might be stated, are "beggarly elements," "the rudiments of the world:" counterfeits of the truth: "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," "the show of wisdom in will-worship," "not after Christ;" artificial lights, striving to supplant the all-sufficient and only true Light. With not a few such, it is what the Apostle calls "spoiling" and "beguiling" (vers. 8, 18). It is putting shackles on the freed spirit—loading the wings with cumbering weights only to hamper and impede them in their upward soarings; mocking the 'man in Christ' with food for babes.

In Him there is "all-sufficiency in all things,"—the entire PLEROMA. "He is the only-Begotten of the Father, *full* of grace and truth" (John i. 14). As it is said in one of the Messianic visions of Zechariah—

"He shall bear the glory" (Zech. vi. 13); or yet again in the typical words of Isaiah—"And they shall hang upon Him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons" (Isa. xxii. 24). "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things." If we are alive—the life is His. If we are growing, the growth is His; if we are strong, the strength is His. How stable, too, and enduring is that union and fellowship! "He unites Himself," says Luther, "to me, with a tie so close and permanent that no man on earth, by the firmest bonds of the most endearing friendship, by the holiest rights of the nearest kindred, could be related more truly or given up to me more intimately. From Him I may and should expect greater things than from the person in the world most devoted to me, because His love to me is to an infinite extent more fervent than the love of the most tried and steadfast friend, than the love of brother to brother, than any love on earth."

With some lowly measure of appropriating faith are we individually able to say in the parallel words of the Apostle of Love—"And out of His *fulness*" (PLEROMA) "have all we received, and grace for grace:" "*Complete* IN HIM." Complete, as in a panoply of divine armour: complete (as we have found described in a recent chapter), in a castle fortified with battlement and bastion. "The name of the Lord" (the

attributes by which He is known) "is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Prov. xviii. 10). Or, as in the already familiar verse, wherein the believer in Christ is similarly described as encircled with a four-fold defence—"Of Him are ye *in Christ Jesus*, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). Upon which words John Howe has the following appropriate comment—"All that is IN CHRIST belongs to those that come to Him. Are we foolish creatures? He is wisdom. Are we guilty? He is righteousness. Are we impure? He is sanctification. Are we enslaved? He is redemption. This, if we be *in Him*; but nothing at all to us if we be not *in Him*." "It is an unspeakable mercy," says another, "when the soul seems to see all those perfections—once a brazen wall to keep him out, now a brazen wall to keep him safe. . . . Our altar is foursquare. It has a face each way, and it has a horn upon each corner, that the manslayer who flies for safety may touch it."

If every day be revealing to us our own miserable shortcomings, the deficiency and defilement of our best obedience: in one word, our *incompleteness*; let it only lead us to exult more and more in the infinite inexhaustible *fulness* of the true PLEROMA;¹ clinging

¹ "Happy would it be if puzzled and perplexed Christians would turn their eyes to the fulness of Christ's obedience, and see themselves complete in Him."—*Flavel*.

with more unwavering confidence to the sustaining assurance of our Apostle in another Epistle we have already dwelt upon,—a promise which neither in his case, nor in ours, can be belied by failure—"My God will supply all your need out of His riches in glory IN CHRIST JESUS." "If we were always," says a writer above quoted, "realising the truth, we are IN CHRIST, we should never be downcast any more."



XXIV.

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE IN CHRIST.

“According as He hath chosen us IN HIM before the foundation of the world.”—Eph. i. 4.

“Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will; that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted IN CHRIST.”—Eph. i. 11, 12.

“According to the eternal purpose which He purposed IN CHRIST JESUS our Lord : IN WHOM we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.”—Eph. iii. 11, 12.

WE revert in this meditation to what in point of ‘theological sequence’ might appropriately occupy an earlier part in the Volume. But neither is it without design that the subject is placed in its present position. The traveller pauses at times to take a retrospective view of the distant receding landscape. So let it be in our contemplation of the Apostle’s favourite inscription in its connection with the eternal purpose IN CHRIST before the foundation of the world.

The cluster of motto-texts are again taken from his encyclical letter. In each of them, with significant

repetition, occurs the *monogram* or its equivalents. They lead us back in thought before the birth of the creation. Passages—vistas of light—are disclosed to us in these far-off cycles and eras, when the Trinity in Unity dwelt alone in the sublime solitudes of eternity. They record the earliest movements of divine love and mercy towards the lost and fallen, ere the trance of that eternity was broken by any manifestation of Almighty power:—Creation still slumbering, so to speak, as a thought in the Infinite Mind. Note well, in these diverse passages, the specific terms in which the Believer's Title-deeds—thus laid up in the archives of heaven—are formulated: "IN HIM," "IN CHRIST," "IN CHRIST JESUS."

We have here, then, represented to us (using the symbol of human language as the only possible expositor of transcendental mysteries), the covenant entered into by the adorable Godhead. The members of the whole Church of which Christ is the Head; in other words, the names of His elect people, were inscribed in the Great Volume of the divine decrees, "while as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world" (Prov. viii. 26). Of these He could say, "In Thy Book all my members were written when as yet there was none of them." This purpose of electing grace IN CHRIST JESUS is everywhere represented as originating with the Eternal Father. Specially is it so spoken of by the lips of "the Faithful and True Witness." Hear the opening

utterances of His intercessory prayer (that portion of Holy Writ we have so often quoted, but which stands alone in its inestimable preciousness, not only as being a divine *Cardiphonia*,—an unfolding of the very heart of Jesus,—but a revelation of the Father's will and purpose). "As THOU hast given Him power over all flesh, that He might give eternal life to as many as THOU hast given Him" (John xvii. 12); "THINE they were, and THOU gavest them Me" (ver. 6). It was the Father's eternal love that first opened the floodgates of mercy. It was the Father's eternal love which first set the stranded vessel floating on the waters. It was His arm which "laid help upon One that is mighty." It was the Father's voice which said, "Deliver from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom" (Job xxxiii. 24). Beautiful are the words of the Saviour in one of His great sermons by the Sea of Galilee, regarding this originating love of the Father. With a divine self-abnegation He says—"For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John vi. 38).

(2). But, while "God so loved the world that He gave;" let us proceed to mark, in this interchange of Covenant-mercy, the voluntary consecration of the Son for the redemption of the world:—although even in His acceptance of the Suretyship, there is a recognition of the Father's antecedent love—"Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do THY will, O my God" (Ps. xl. 7, 8). Not

the less interesting, however, is the alacrity with which the adorable Redeemer responded to the Father's will. He, as the Eternal Son, infinitely independent and self-existent, rich in all the plenitude of the divine perfections, was incapable of any accession to His underived ineffable glory; or rather, that glory was susceptible of no expansion, nor enlargement. He was "heir of all things." He "made the worlds." All space was His dominion. Creation was His Palace; the universe His Temple. Yet He tells us the spot in His vast illimitable Empire in which He mainly rejoiced: "Rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and My delights were with the sons of men" (Prov. viii. 31). And when these lofty purposes came to be fulfilled and consummated, what does He represent as being still His chiefest joy? It was the same as it had been in "the ages of the ages;"—"The glory which Thou gavest *Me*, I have given *them*" (John xvii. 22). The intercessory prayer reaches its climax and conclusion thus, "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved *Me* may be in them, and I in them" (John xvii. 26).

Who dare speak of contrariety between the will of the Eternal Father and Eternal Son, when we listen to such an amazing declaration as this—"THEREFORE doth My Father love *Me*, because I lay down My life" (John x. 17). John, in after times, speaking in the name of the whole brotherhood of saints, anticipates and repudiates the false theological dogma that would either question the spontaneity of the Father's love, or repre-

sent that unpurchasable love as *being* purchased and secured through the intervention of the Son—"We have known and believed the love which *God* hath to us" (1 John iv. 16).

(3.) Once more :—In this purpose of grace we have the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the ever-blessed triune Godhead, conjoined with the Eternal Father and the Son in thoughts of unutterable love. "The Spirit of God," we read, "moved on the face of the waters." He brooded over elemental chaos, when the Omnipotent fiat went forth—"Let there be light!" He would thereby symbolise and proclaim His interest in the world about to be redeemed. It was "through the Eternal Spirit" that Christ "offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. ix. 14). Moreover, it is He who carries on, and carries out, these great purposes of electing grace in the spiritual illumination and regeneration of every redeemed soul, and in imparting a capacitating meetness for the heavenly inheritance. We are "changed into the same (divine) image from glory to glory, *by the Lord the Spirit*" (Margin, 2 Cor. iii. 18). In words which immediately follow the second of our motto-verses, we have the entire work of the Holy Ghost very specially interwoven, so to speak, with the Apostle's monogram, and in conjunction, too, with the believer's predestination—"IN WHOM ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of

promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory" (Eph. i. 13, 14).

Mysterious indeed, and unfathomable to our finite capacities, is this great doctrine. Yet how often our Apostle refers to it! Even in the closing salutations of a letter, we found he cannot resist the allusion—"Salute Rufus, CHOSEN *in the Lord*, and his mother and mine."¹ God's eternal purpose and calling formed, in words already quoted, an incentive to him in running the Christian race—"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God IN CHRIST JESUS" (Phil. iii. 14). The same sublime theme seems to have occupied his latest thoughts. In the final letter penned in his Roman dungeon, he thus writes—"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, . . . according to *His own purpose and grace*, which was given us IN CHRIST JESUS before the world began" (2 Tim. i. 9).

Need we wonder that he thus fondly clings to that transcendent truth! He truly felt it was the strongest, the most inviolable, safeguard of his security, a very "anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast." "In hope of

¹ Romans xvi. 13. We previously referred (chap. ix.) to this verse. We may here further remark, that there is surely a special and touching epigrammatic beauty in its complimentary sequence—"his mother and mine." As Barnes briefly paraphrases it—"His in a literal sense; mine in a figurative." It recalls a yet more touching and tender saying—"Woman, behold thy Son; Son, behold thy mother" (John xix. 26, 27).

eternal life, *which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began* " (Titus i. 2). In the comprehensive charter of the believer's privileges contained in his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians (chap. iii. 21), he asserts, "All things are yours." Why? "Because," he adds, "ye are Christ's, *and Christ is God's*." Each Person in the Divine Trinity, indeed, may be regarded as having given the solemn pledge,—*"They shall never perish."* Against the Church (with its chief corner-stone laid in everlasting ages, reared in this "unison of the Eternal purpose") the gates of hell shall never prevail. Every individual believer can say, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure" (2 Sam. xxiii. 5). "The covenant," are the words of our Apostle, "was confirmed before OF GOD *in Christ*" (Gal. iii. 17). Well may he speak of it in his Ephesian Epistle (chap. i. 18):—"That ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." In the firm grasping of this doctrine we are necessarily filled with all joy and peace in believing. Not in a restricted, but in its amplest spiritual meaning, as applied to every member of the Church of Christ, "He that is called IN THE LORD is the Lord's freeman" (1 Cor. vii. 22).

Connecting the Apostle's monogram specially with the Second Person in the Holy Trinity, how peculiarly that Book of Election—that covenant roll, "sealed with seven seals," is in the keeping of "the Lion of

the tribe of Judah !” (Rev. v. 5). To revert to Paul’s simile previously dwelt upon, we are “*rooted IN CHRIST.*” “The root of that Tree is stronger than the foundations of the earth. . . . The same love that He had to thee, when He gave thee to His Son; the same love He has to thee now, infinite, unchangeable” (*Evans*). “Who shall” (who can) “lay anything to the charge of God’s elect.” “We are IN HIM that is *true*”¹ (1 John v. 20). Oh, how well to know and believe, that it is not on our own fitful frames and feelings and capricious emotions our eternal well-being depends, but that Christ’s everlasting interest *in us*, is the ground of our present and everlasting interest *in Him*. “The gifts and calling of God are without

¹ ‘*In Him that is TRUTH.*’ We have here (and also in one of the opening pages of this Volume) quoted from the First and earlier Epistle of the Apostle John. In his Third Epistle (which we have the strongest ground for believing was written in his extreme old age, and therefore containing the last utterances of this honoured and beloved disciple), we find the following saying—“I have no greater joy, than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4). Among the cherished Valedictory words of his Divine Lord, and which he alone of the Evangelists records, there is a well-known golden sentence which could not fail specially to linger in his ears,—the ever-memorable—“I am the Way, and *the Truth*, and the Life” (John xiv. 6). When, therefore, in conveying what may be called his farewell messages and benedictions to his “beloved Gaius” (and through him to the ages and churches of future Christendom), he asserts, that “he has no greater joy than to see his children walking IN TRUTH” :—(possibly, at least, his meaning) walking IN HIM who is Himself *THE Truth* Incarnate,—may he not be regarded as, with his latest breath, echoing and emphasising the IN CHRISTO of his great Contemporary ?

I am indebted for the substance of this thought, to a suggestive discourse of my friend Dr. Plumptre’s, I heard as these pages were passing through the press.

repentance." Here is the history of that calling:—"God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love where-with He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together *with Christ*¹ (by grace ye are saved)" (Eph. ii. 4, 5).

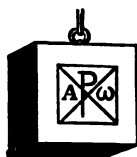
"All that the Father giveth Me," are the words of the divine Redeemer Himself, "shall *come to Me*." He is standing with a wealth of glory in His hand, and the hoarded love of Eternity in His heart, and saying, "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt. xviii. 14). If that be His Father's will, what is His own? "Him that cometh unto Me I *will* in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37). "Father, I *WILL* that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory" (John xvii. 24).

That doctrine of election,—the purpose of God to His people in Christ Jesus, before the world began, (which, inscrutable as it is, runs, as we have seen, like a golden thread through the warp and woof of divine revelation), will reappear on the lips of the enthroned Judge and Heavenly King. On the Great Day—"the day of His espousals, the day of the gladness of His heart"—He is represented as saying—"Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared

¹ In some MSS., indeed, it is the Apostle's monogram (*ἐν*): but for this there is not sufficient authority: although the meaning in the passage is the very same.

for you *from the foundation of the world* " (Matt. xxv. 34).

With no words can we more appropriately close this meditation than those of our Apostle in 2 Thess. i. 11, 12 :—" Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye IN HIM, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."



XXV.

THE PROMISES IN CHRIST.

“Partakers of His promise IN CHRIST by the Gospel.”—Eph. iii. 6.

“For all the promises of God IN HIM are yea, and IN HIM Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”—2 Cor. i. 20.

GOD the Father is the great Treasure-house of Promises :—the divine Fountain-head. But Christ is the channel through which the river, and every rill that swells it, flows—“All the promises of God,” with their boundless wealth and preciousness, “are IN HIM.” “*Whereby* are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Pet. i. 4). The Church, as the Bride of the Lamb, is dowered with these as her marriage portion, “glory, honour, immortality, eternal life.” The believer, in a spiritual sense, and with a spiritual telescope, can sweep the whole stellar firmament of promise, and say, “They are all mine, because *Christ* is mine.” “If ye abide IN ME,” are the valedictory words of the Saviour, “ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John xv. 7). “IN CHRIST,” everything within the compass of omni-

potence to bestow, that is really good for us, becomes ours. "IN CHRIST," we are called "children of the promise:" "heirs of promise." "The glory," says Jesus, "which Thou gavest *Me*, I *have* given *them*." IN CHRIST—all the attributes of God are embarked on our side, and pledged for our salvation. This Prince of the kings of the earth, the true Ahasuerus, seated in His Royal banqueting-house, stretches out the golden sceptre of promise, asking, "What is thy petition, and it shall be granted thee, and what is thy request?" (Esther v. 6). Not more do the facets of the diamond derive their brilliancy from the light; not more do the planets in the solar system derive their glory, and the flowers which deck the earth their beauty and colour from the sun, than do the promises of Scripture borrow their heavenly lustre and loveliness from Christ, the true Sun of Righteousness.

I remember standing gazing on one of the sunsets in the Holy Land, near the shores of the Dead Sea. The side of a mountain sloping towards its leaden cavernous depths, and which shortly before seemed to partake of the sterility around, became all at once lit up like a sheet of living fire. It was the myriad clusters of red anemones, which clothe Palestine like a carpet in early spring, that were kindled and transformed into ruby splendour, as the flaming orb of day descended over the heights of Moab: Picture of the promises of God, which have a new beauty and glory imparted to them when seen IN CHRIST, under the

radiance of One "above the brightness of the sun;"—ay, and we may also add, reaching down to the very brink of humanity's dead and dearest sea shores.

That one promise-word of the Saviour, in its comprehensiveness, embraces all that the sinner needs, all that God can bestow:—it is, as if the whole contents of the glorious casket were gathered up in one:—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me *hath everlasting life*" (John vi. 47). "Great," remarks a valued writer, "as Jesus is in the promise, He is greater in the fulfilment." "Christ," says Bunyan, "is not one jot the poorer for all the forgiveness that He has given away to great sinners. There is the same virtue in His merits to save now as there was at the very beginning. Oh! the riches of the grace of Christ." The Apostle in one of our motto-verses further tells us that these His promises are not only exceeding *great*, and exceeding *precious*, but exceeding *sure*. "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ," says he, in the immediately preceding context, "who was preached among you by us . . . was not yea, and nay, but IN HIM was yea" (2 Cor. i. 19). In another place, speaking of those who are "to obtain the salvation which is IN CHRIST JESUS with eternal glory," he adds, "He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. ii. 13).

There are times, indeed, when His ways are mysterious. We cannot descry or discern the reason of His dealings: when, it may be, some cherished

lights of life are suddenly eclipsed;—the cloud without either bow or silver lining: when, in the plaintive musing of the Psalmist, we are led in our misgiving to say—"Hath God forgotten to be gracious, and doth His *promise* fail for evermore?" But be it ours to hope on, and trust on. There may be needed discipline in the waiting. The noblest and rarest tribute and triumph of faith is contained in the words, "Though He slay me, yet will I *trust* in Him" (Job xiii. 15). It has been well said—"He doth purposely conceal His designs from His children, in order that they may live upon His absolute promises *in Jesus*." The day at all events will come, when "in His light we shall see light:" when all the by-past pilgrimage will be revealed, spanned with the luminous 'bow of God;'—the golden lettering gleaming upon it—"He is faithful that promised."

Let us, then, pursue our appointed way, knowing that that way from first to last is paved with "promises IN CHRIST;" and that "what He hath spoken, He is able also to perform." His promises are suited for every age, every diversity of circumstance, every variety of temperament, every changing experience: strength in weakness, light in darkness, comfort in sorrow, support in temptation, peace in unrest, hope and pardon in despair. And when 'the supreme hour' overtakes, these become brightest, truest, best of all. The memorable incident in His own ministry of love is often reproduced when "in the fourth watch of the

night," the time when the darkness was deepest, He came to the tempest-tossed disciples, "walking on the sea." They were troubled. They thought only at first of some demon-shape from the spirit-world. "They were afraid, and cried out for fear." But, gentle, well-known accents stilled the storm without, and the storm within: "Fear not; it is I; be not afraid!"

Yes! as '*in Christ*' is a glorious word and reality to live upon, so it is a glorious word and reality to die upon. See how the promise (and the promise observe **IN HIM**) lighted up the waning hours of the great Apostle. In the last letter his hand penned, in his Roman dungeon, it is beautiful to note its first, its opening sentence—"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is **IN CHRIST JESUS**" (2 Tim. i. 1). The promise of eternal life was now, like a radiant beacon, within sight, close at hand; the last billows were bringing him into the desired haven. But it was a beacon light **IN CHRIST**. Life to him, we have often noted before, had no reality, no glory, apart from a living Saviour. So, neither would death, apart from the same, bring with it joy or peace. If he thought of it under the image of sleep, it was a sleep **IN JESUS**. It is remarkable that one, who, of all the champions of the faith, stood in moral heroism perhaps nearest to St. Paul himself, died literally with **IN CHRISTO**, as the word which alike last fell upon his ear, and which evoked the last assent from his lips. "Venerable Father," said

Dr. Jonas to Luther, at his dying moment, "do you die trusting IN CHRIST?" . . . He answered by an audible and joyful 'Yes.'¹

Meanwhile, alike for a living hour and a dying hour, let us be animated and quickened, as well as solemnised by the wondrous consummation of these 'promises in Christ.' The Apostle Peter, in the verse already quoted, represents them as so many golden ladder-steps conducting to the most unspeakable height of bliss and glory to which created beings can attain—"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4). It is the fulfilment of the Redeemer's own prayer, the full realisation of His people's mystical union in *Himself* (John xvii. 21). "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1).

¹ Luther's Watchwords, p. 355.




XXVI.

SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST.

"Sanctified IN CHRIST JESUS."—1 Cor. i. 2.

"As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye IN HIM."—Col. ii. 6.

EEPLY solemn is the theme which these motto-verses suggest (and which we have purposely reserved) in connection with the Apostle's monogram—"Sanctification IN CHRIST."

In one of our recent meditations on God's eternal purpose in the salvation of the elect, the divine object and consummation, so to speak, of that election is thus set forth—"According as He hath chosen us IN HIM before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Eph. i. 4). Again and again, in the same epistle, is the truth of the believer's consecration IN CHRIST reiterated. "For we are His workmanship, created IN CHRIST JESUS unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. ii. 10; sc also Eph. ii. 21; v. 25).

Need we wonder that the thought of 'Holiness'

should be so intimately associated, by the Apostle, with the mystical union subsisting between Jesus and His people! It were only strange had it been otherwise. Sanctification is, or ought to be, as natural to the Christian, as the flower is to the root or stalk. In the case of a healthy tree, the sap permeates through stem and branch and twig; and as little could a healthy and vigorous plant exhibit only withered and leafless branches, as a soul joined to the true Vine—"rooted in Him"—be found barren and unfruitful. Holiness is just the outer expression and manifestation of the new, inner life in Christ. As such, surely it ought, from its very nature, being the result and outcome of living union and communion with a living Lord, to be loftier and purer than the purest and most elevated virtues of Pagan moralist—"He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth *much* fruit" (John xv. 5).

This resurrection-life to holiness occupies a prominent place in that 'identified parallelism,' which in previous pages we found to be a favourite theme of our Apostle's. "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth

we should not serve sin. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God IN (Gr. ἐν) Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. vi. 4, 5, 5, 11). Partakers of this new, Risen life of the Redeemer, it may be said of each of the living members, what the Apostle said of the living Head—"In that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God" (Rom. vi. 10). "His death *for* us," says one, now 'without fault before the throne,' 'is comparatively easy to grasp. By it, *I am saved*. But I wish to live in His life, to realise Him with me, and to get my wants supplied, and my spirit sanctified, by a constant association as it were with a living Jesus."¹

In a figurative shape, and retaining the Apostle's monogram, the nature and obligation of this life of holiness are alike brought forcibly before us in the second of our motto-verses—"Walk ye IN HIM." It expresses, under the most familiar of emblems, the carrying about with us a realised consciousness of our oneness with the risen Saviour. Were that thought constantly and habitually cherished, what a preventative and preservative against temptation! How sensitive and shrinking would be the dread of marring and sullyng the soul thus glorified with the presence, and identified with the honour, of its Great Lord! If Christ, in His own significant words, be THE WAY, we

¹ Mary B. M. Duncan's Bible Hours.

may, to each one of His true followers, apply (by accommodation) the injunction of the ancient prophet—"And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isa. xxx. 21). The way, observe, is "*in Christ*": yet note, also, that the pilgrims in that way are represented as "turning to the right hand and turning to the left." As a German commentator expounds and paraphrases it—"The wayfarers adapt themselves thus to their varied worldly callings, this one turning at times to the right, this other to the left, as life's imperative duties demand. Still there dare be no deflection from the *one* only way itself.' These callings and avocations are all *IN HIM*: and we may appropriately add with the Apostle—"As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" (Gal. vi. 16).

Have we said that this sanctification flows as a necessary sequence and corollary from the new life in Christ Jesus:—that no sooner is that mystical union formed, than the subject of it becomes a "sanctified" and "separated" one, according to the Apostle's *nexus* in one of the passages previously quoted—"IN WHOM . . . *an holy temple in the Lord*"?

Yes, truly; such is the lofty ideal, at least, of the Christian life and character. Alas! however, how difficult, how impossible the realisation! What poor transcripts of the divine original! How meagre the

attainment of the saintliest, how much more inadequate those of the average believer! See how our Apostle feels and expresses his own wide severance from that ideal: how vivid as well as true his description of the dual nature, the two antagonist principles:—the ardent aspiration after holiness of heart and life, yet the dead weights which impeded him and his fellow-runners in the spiritual race—"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 22-24). He knew Christ, as few had known Him: he had 'won Christ,' as few had won Him: yet he speaks as if all were yet unattained:—"That I *may* know Him;" "that I *may* win Him" (Phil. iii. 8, 10). Nevertheless, observe, the race, with him, was never abandoned. That unattained ideal is still pursued with unwavering and persistent effort—"But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God IN CHRIST JESUS" (Phil. iii. 12-14).

And be it remembered for our comfort, none more

graciously owns and recognises the difficulty—none more tenderly sympathises with our poor, imperfect, halting efforts, than the All-perfect ONE Himself. In this, as in all other things, “He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust.” He makes infinite allowance for the difficulties of approaching that perfection to which in His case alone it was possible to attain. He speaks of His people, as “lilies among thorns”: as “lambs in the midst of wolves.” With a touching compassion for their weakness and shortcomings, He interjects, in the very midst of His Great Intercessory, the significant ejaculation—“*These are in the world!*” IN THE WORLD,—struggling, falling, beaten down with a great fight of temptations. “The flesh is weak,” was the generous allowance made for those, faint in body, and faint in soul, who were found slumbering at the Garden Gate, unwakeful at the hour of all time, when sympathy and vigilance were most needed, and neglect least excusable!

As a second ground of comfort and heart-cheer, not only have we the assured SYMPATHY of Jesus, but we have the promise of His *supporting grace*. In the midst of his own conscious weakness and shortcoming, we have in a former page found our Apostle saying, “I can do all things IN CHRIST which strengtheneth me” (Phil. iv. 13).

Of the “consolations in Christ,” referred to elsewhere by him, not one surely is more precious and

sustaining than this—that He has made provision to deliver, not only from the guilt but from the dominion of sin. “He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. xii. 9). “His heart,” is the utterance of a saintly writer who knew from experience the reality of that upholding strength, “His heart is large enough to take me in; His hand is strong enough to bear me up.” Nor is the theme of our present meditation to be relegated to the place of the mystical. Nay rather, it may be taken as forming the most elevating and persuasive of incentives to pure deed and elevated action. IN CHRIST.—That monogram is, it ought to be, a divine talisman to crush the guilty purpose, to stifle the vicious passion, to quench the kindling spark of revenge, to bear unretaliated the cruel taunt, to surrender the dubious vantage-ground, to accept without murmur the daily burden, and submit without fret to the exacted sacrifice. In a word, to be, and to do, and to suffer, because of HIM. “Walking IN HIM.”—Whenever in any difficulty or perplexity, hesitating as to the path of duty, trembling it may be on the verge of temptation, let the footstep be arrested by the question, ‘How would my Lord and Saviour have acted here?’ “He that saith He abideth IN HIM ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked” (1 John ii. 6).

How it becomes those “sanctified in Christ Jesus” to exercise a scrupulous carefulness and circumspection in

thought, word, and deed : remembering that the world is keen enough, yes, and unjust enough, to see the Master reflected in the conduct of His *unworthy* and often *blameworthy* disciples. How many, on the other hand, have these and such-like thoughts, happily compelled, by a holy jealousy, to retain footing on the Rock, when the waves might have otherwise swept into the seething abyss ! How many have been raised above what was selfish, ungenerous, unworthy, by keeping habitually before them the simple words of our Apostle, "My ways which be "IN CHRIST" (1 Cor. iv. 17). I know few sentences or sentiments more beautiful than the following :—"All I ask of you is, BE JUST. Lay that blame on *me*, and blame *me* as much as you will, but be just to *Him*, who cannot be answerable for the offences of His disciples ; since if they obeyed His precepts and imitated His example, they never could thus offend. And at all events believe this, for it is the simple truth, that if the thought of HIM has not done all it ought, it has done something. I have suppressed many, as I think, most deserved sarcasms, which sprang into my mind in the ardour of composition, and have struck out many more which have flowed from my pen, and I have done both, mainly from the recollection of HIM." ¹

Meanwhile, let us cleave to the gracious promise, that if our union be true, real, sincere, "He who hath

¹ Conclusion of "Defence of the Eclipse of Faith."


begun the good work will carry it on." The word of the Lord is sure. "Of Him are ye *in Christ Jesus*, who of God is made unto you . . . *sanctification*" (1 Cor. i. 30). And if every day leads us more and more to mark and mourn the slowness of our progress—the devious and distant orbit we describe around the Great Central Sun of our bliss and being—let it be our comfort to know that the day is coming, when, bathed in the beams of the 'True Light,' with no darkening cloud or disturbing medium, "we *shall* be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." "AND every man that hath this hope IN HIM purifieth himself, even as He is pure."



XXVII.

NO SEPARATION IN CHRIST.

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.”—Rom. viii. 38, 39.

 HE challenge contained in these two verses forms an appropriate topic in approaching the close of this Volume. As “*in Christ*” began, so “*in Christ*” ends this beautiful eighth of Romans. To repeat what was noted in a previous meditation, and which has frequently been adverted to by others, the “no *condemnation*” IN HIM, of the opening verse, is followed by the “no *separation*” FROM HIM, in the concluding one.

As we peruse the context of the chapter, we seem to be ever and anon in the midst of a spiritual conflict, surrounded with the clang of battle. But now the victorious standard is planted on the height far above the din of encounter. In what precedes, we are conscious of toiling up the steeps of the mountain

side ; now we are within sight of the summit, above and beyond the storm-clouds. He puts the shout of triumph into his own lips, and the lips of all others who are safe IN CHRIST.

If, as has been surmised, one great object the Apostle had in writing this Roman Epistle, was for the purpose of sustaining his brethren in the Imperial city who were either suffering themselves, or had seen their beloved relatives suffering at the cruel hands of Nero, we can imagine how gracious and acceptable would be the solace thus conveyed: the elevating assurance that, though subjected to the miscarriage of justice at a human tribunal, and *condemned* by the behest of a ferocious earthly tyrant, there was ONE "judging righteous judgment" who uttered the exculpatory sentence—" *not condemned.*" And, better still, if, in the case of not a few, imprisonment and martyrdom had produced their mournful result in the severance of earthly fellowships, how cheering the thought that there was ONE from whose love and presence there could be "*no separation,*" no, not even by pang or torture, flame or sword ! Hear the words of heart-cheer he puts into the lips of the comrades who are falling thickly around him ;—words which will in due time be appropriate to himself at a similar hour :—" It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall

separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. vi 33-35).

Can we, in some feeble measure, enter into the full meaning of this chapter, and make its glorious terminating challenge our own? Can we sing the wondrous song of victory with its opening and closing keynote—"IN CHRIST"?

LIFE "shall not separate!" The world may rock to ruin; the stars may fall from their orbits; or rather, nature's funeral pile must be lighted; Creation, hoary with years, must in due time succumb to the inevitable laws of decadence. There is the same transience in the more sacred provinces of life. Earthly relationships and friendships are at the best fickle, mutable, arbitrary. Change they may, perish at some time they must. Not so is the bond of fellowship uniting us with Christ. There are no such precarious ties and tenures here; no such sorrowful farewells. It is union beyond the reach of change and peril, chance and vicissitude. "He alone," says Augustine, "never loseth what is dear to him, to whom all things are dear in Him who is never lost!"

DEATH shall not separate. *Death!* What! that which is so sadly and irrevocably allied with the thought of separation! Yet here too, in the noblest sense of it, separation there is not, and cannot be. "I give unto them *eternal life*, and they shall never perish." At what is truly misnamed 'the closing hour,' Being (immortal being) is only interrupted: no,

not even is it suspended, but rather transferred, exalted, perfected. The stream of existence is indeed for the moment lost from view; but not as the river of Palestine is lost in the gloomy depths of the Dead Sea, shut up in that gleamless caldron with no exit or emergence; but lost, rather as the river of Egypt is said to lose itself in the sands, to reappear when it joins the ocean. That river, hidden for a time, will emerge living and life-giving on the shores of the illimitable sea, to lose and merge its waters in the Eternal Ocean of divine love. For, to repeat a verse oft quoted in previous pages—but which is specially appropriate here—it is “*the Life hid with Christ in God; AND when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory*” (Col. iii. 3, 4). Separated: yes, but it is only as the disciples were separated from their dear Lord after the Resurrection. We all remember the night on the Sea of Tiberias; the thought of its unremunerated toil mingling with sadder, deeper, more sacred ponderings on His absence. But, as morning with its faint earliest ray dawns on the silvery beach, there stands a well-known Figure. There is heard a well-known Voice, welcoming them as “children” to the meal already prepared,—“It is the Lord!”

So with the believer and death with its night of tossing on the tempestuous waves. But, ere long, the darkness is past; and lo! on the Heavenly shore, there is a Voice heard inviting to sit down at the

banquet of love; and, better than that on earthly lakeside,—a banquet with “no separation:”—“It is the Lord” FOR EVER!

Death has somewhere been called one of the “gates of pearl” spoken of in Revelation. Not so, is it, assuredly, from the earthly view. No: there, it is rather a gloomy portal; stern, repulsive, iron-barred. But seen by angels, and the saintly multitude from “the other side,”—“Every several gate was of one pearl” (Rev. xxi. 21).

Let us seek to habituate ourselves to this view of death—“death IN CHRIST.” An enemy truly, but ‘the last enemy.’ Then, in whatever shape it may overtake us; whether in the quiet slumber of our own chamber—a peaceful departure tended by the hands of loving affection; or the slow ravages of wasting disease, the wild delirium of raging fever, the crash of some sudden and unforeseen calamity,—we shall be able, like Paul, not, perhaps, as in his case, with a pæan of triumph, but under the sublime consciousness of being IN CHRIST, with simple confiding faith to say—“I am persuaded” that *death* . . . shall not “separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“And so shall we ever be WITH THE LORD!”




XXVIII

NO SEPARATION IN CHRIST.


"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD."—Rom. viii. 38, 39.

"The salvation which is IN CHRIST JESUS with eternal glory."—2 Tim. ii. 10.

N our former meditation we found the Apostle uttering the exultant challenge and "persuasion," that nought—no circumstances of Life; no, nor Death itself; no created thing, no created being, could ever separate him from the love of God. And the ground of that challenge—the guarantee of inviolable security, was derived from his now familiar *monogram*—the realised mystical union and fellowship with his divine Lord. He is especially emphatic in its avowal. His words in the original are more expressive than in our rendering.¹

¹ 'The love'—'the special love'—(τῆς) "Here plainly enough *God's love to us in Christ*,—to us as we are IN CHRIST" (Alford).

The completed work of the Great Surety, His cross and passion, His glorious resurrection, His triumphal ascension, His prevailing intercession:—varied links in the golden chain spoken of in succession in the same chapter, place the salvation of the child of God beyond the possibility of failure or disaster. Who shall, who can, who dare separate? In the words of a gifted writer, "The movables may go; the birthright and inheritance cannot. . . . He that loved them out of darkness will love them into everlasting light." "How happy," says Pascal, in language very appropriate to the present remarks, "is the soul who finds his delight in Thee, since he may abandon himself to Thy love. . . . How firm and lasting is his happiness, since his hope cannot be disappointed, because Thou wilt never be destroyed, and neither life nor death shall separate him from the object of his desires." Not, (to repeat the qualifying remark made in more than one previous meditation) that that triumphant song of the Apostle can always be sung with unfaltering lip, or the vessel of faith be borne ever onward with propitious breezes over summer seas. No:—the normal description and expression of the spiritual as of the natural life rather is, "the day is neither clear nor dark" (Zech. xiv. 7). Like the shipmen of old in the Sea of Adria, there are times when "neither sun nor stars in many days appear, and no small tempest lay on us" (Acts xxvii. 20). Towards the close of the very chapter from which our motto



verse is taken (indeed immediately preceding it), the Apostle gives the catalogue of hostile spiritual forces. These, in a hundred varying forms and phases of antagonism, are assailing the life of faith in the believer. And a formidable list it is. "Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword" (Rom. viii. 35). But none of these, nor all combined, can effect his final overthrow. His security IN CHRIST is beyond the reach of peril or vicissitude. That covenant, well-ordered in all things and sure, will guarantee the tempest-tossed riding out the storm. As it has been said, "If there be tossing and doubting, it is the heaving of a ship at anchor, not the dashing on the rocks." The heavenly Bridegroom pledges His troth to a deathless union with His affianced Bride—"I will betroth thee unto Me for ever" (Hosea ii. 19). The inheritance is won, and entered upon by "Him that is true: and," it is added, "we are IN HIM that is true, even *in* His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John v. 20). The Little-Faiths as well as the Great-Faiths can utter the challenge—"Who shall separate?"

While, then, sin may, and often does, justly dim and obscure the sense of pardon and the hope of heaven; while the wailing acknowledgment of the stricken soul often arises, "Mine iniquities *have* SEPARATED between me and my God," let us remember the divine whisper heard within the veil, already quoted in one of our earlier chapters: a whisper on the lips of Him "who also maketh intercession for us," turning the mourn-

ing into dancing, and exchanging the sackcloth for the girdle of gladness,—“I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” Below, a sinking, fragile, yes, apparently lost disciple; above, a praying, interceding, omnipotent Saviour. Below, sin triumphing and triumphant; but above, grace triumphant too; and leaving the assaulted soul *more* than conqueror through (in) *Him* that loved it! The God who cannot lie thus at last vindicates the ineffable meaning and preciousness of His own wondrous words, with their “five negatives,” as they have been called (for so it is in the untransferable tautology of the original),—“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee—no never, no *never*, no NEVER!” The challenge echoing on through infinite ages—“Who shall separate?” and the answering echo—“*No never, no never!*”

We have just spoken of the remains of corruption—the presence and the power of sin in the heart, as marring and hindering the full outburst of the believer’s song of triumph. There may be some whose eyes trace these pages who have a different experience; whose trembling, faltering notes proceed from a different cause: not so much from sin, as from sorrow. Their harps being hung on the willows of grief, how can they sing the Lord’s song? And yet, in another sense, as partakers of a living union with their divine Lord, it is their very sadness which will best attune their lips to gladness, in the fuller realisation of that Saviour’s promised nearness and love—“Ye now

therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John xvi. 22). The kindred glowing words of St. Paul in his 2nd Epistle to Timothy are specially suggested: an epistle which we know was written when death and its solemn thoughts were very nigh the writer. They are words, moreover, which have imparted to them a special interest as being ingeniously supposed, from their structure, to have formed a prophetic *hymn* of the ancient Church—a fragment from its first service of song.¹ May we not take them as appropriate for all; but specially for the mourner in Jesus? May we without presumption think of them as sung over the holy dust of the Catacombs and their sepulchral slabs, on which, as we have seen, IN CHRISTO was often reverently though rudely carved? Here are the two opening lines:—

"If we *died with Him*, we shall also live *with Him*.

If we *suffer*, we shall also *reign with Him*" (2 Tim. ii. 11, 12).

Death *in Christ*, assuredly followed by a spiritual and glorious resurrection IN HIM. '*Death shall not separate!*'

And this further suggests, that our meditation would be incomplete without a few closing thoughts on an additional prominent clause in the Apostle's challenge,—"*Things to come shall not separate.*" The trance of

¹ See Mack, quoted by Dr. Reynolds in *Expositor*, p. 298. Also Mr. Cheetham's interesting article on Ancient Church Hymns in Smith's "Dictionary of Christian Antiquities," vol. i. p. 801.

that beatific heavenly bliss can never be broken; and this, once more, because we are IN CHRIST. Identification with Him on earth, in His cross and sufferings, is followed by identification with Him in heaven in His crown and glory. The avowal of time is the theme and rejoicing of eternity—"I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

God is OUR God in Christ. If I may be allowed to quote remarks made elsewhere, which seem appropriate here—"The words to us are written (which to the unredeemed angels they are not) in the blood of atonement! Imagine, for a moment, a conversation between a bright angel in heaven and a ransomed sinner from earth. The angel can speak of a past eternity; he can tell a glorious pedigree; he can point up to his Almighty Maker, and say, "He has been *my God* for ages and ages past. I have been kept, supported, gladdened by His amazing mercy, long before the birth of time or your world!' 'True,' we may imagine the redeemed sinner to reply, 'but I can tell of something more wondrous still: *He is my God in covenant.* Thou art His by *creation*, but I am His also by *adoption, filiation, sonship.* Though grace has kept thee through these countless ages, during which Thou hast cast thy crown at His feet, what is the grace manifested to *thee*, in comparison with the grace manifested to *me*? Grace made thee holy, and preserved thee holy. But grace found me on the brink of despair; plucked me as a brand

from the burning; brought me from the depths of woe and degradation to a throne and a crown! *Thy* God hath loved *thee*. *My* God hath loved *me* and GIVEN HIMSELF *for me*! Who shall separate me "from the love of Christ"?¹ If every saint in glory is to be "a priest unto God" (Rev. i. 6), the IN CHRISTO of the catacombed dead on earth will become—like the Urim and Thummim—(the "gems oracular" which gleamed on the high priest's ephod or breastplate of old), the consecrated pledge of immortal bliss. We have seen in one of these opening meditations, when the Apostle Paul was caught up to Paradise, what the thought of heaven ever afterwards was to him:—"In Christ." All our heavenly knowledge will come direct from this mysterious everlasting union. Here there is needed the intervention of the Word, Ordinances, and Sacraments. There the spiritual world will no more be lighted up by satellites. The fairness of the moon will give place to the brightness of the sun. Heaven will be an eternal Mount of Transfiguration—Hermon with all its radiance, and none of its transience. As every eye rests on the One all-glorious Person—the true Shekinah,—the old utterance will be breathed with an eternal significance—"Lord, it is good for us to be here."

Further still, IN CHRIST will be the guarantee for an ever-progressive acquaintance with divine realities, and

¹ "The Hart and the Waterbrooks."

the entering ever deeper and deeper into the secrets of Redeeming Love:—soaring ever higher and higher to the heights of His revealed glory. The Song of heaven will be a true *Excelsior*—a “Song of degrees.” Like the well-known Parabolic assymtotes of the mathematician (to adopt Addison’s beautiful and appropriate simile), the saint in glory will be always approaching nearer and nearer the Infinite perfection, although feeling the utter impossibility of that ever being reached. Jesus the Great Shepherd will lead His people from steep to steep on the everlasting hills, and as they survey the ever-widening prospect, He will say to them, as He did to Nathaniel of old, “Ye shall see greater things than these!”

Who, indeed, can form the faintest conception, in this lower world and imperfect state, of all which this wondrous mystical union involves, in its connection with “Things to come”? Saints becoming one IN CHRIST *for ever*. His ransomed people, not so much constellating around Himself as their great central orb; He ‘resting them’ in His love, and joying over them with singing (Zeph. iii. 17): but rather like the dewdrops exhaled by the morning sun, absorbed in the sun itself; not the living stones rising tier on tier, but rather those enshrined and incorporated in the Great Eternal Temple; according to the words of the Apocalyptic vision—words best left in their own mysterious indefinite grandeur—“I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb

are the temple of it" (Rev. xxi. 22). They are "glorified together." *They* are glorified *in Him*, and He is glorified *in them*. It is the Dove of the Psalmist—"its wings covered with silver and its feathers with yellow gold," no longer hastening its escape from the windy storm and tempest, but sinking out of sight in the clefts of the Rock,—folding its pinions in the perfected bliss of everlasting rest and everlasting love IN HIM!

Yes, wonderful climax this in our motto-verse, where the Apostle, rising in his eagle flight from perch to perch, from altitude to altitude, defies "things to come," the cycles of Eternity—ever to separate Him from "the love of God which is *in Christ Jesus* our Lord."

"Then across the border river :
From His presence nought can sever :
We shall sing His praise for ever !"

If the consciousness of being "IN CHRIST" on earth be supremest happiness, what will it be to be IN CHRIST in glory, and that for "the ages of the ages!" If even here, amid falling shadows and interrupted converse, the assurance of an Invisible Presence evokes the testimony—"Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us by the way" (Luke xxiv. 32):—what will it be to sit at a Banqueting Table where, unlike the earthly one, there can be no "vanishing out of sight!" If the few wavelets of Divine love be precious as they break on the earthly shores, what will

it be to be launched on the Infinite ocean of Redeeming love, listening to its everlasting music,—and enabled in some feeble measure to comprehend (but even then, oh, *how feebly* !), the height and depth, the length and breadth of the love of God IN CHRIST! Then, at least, shall Paul's prayer be fulfilled: the glorious consummation of the motto-words which head this chapter, and on which, page after page in this volume, we have been dwelling,—“That they may also obtain THE salvation which is IN CHRIST JESUS with *eternal glory* !”



IN PACE.

XXIX.

AM I IN CHRIST?

“Know ye not your own selves, how that JESUS CHRIST is in you, except ye be reprobates.”—2 Cor. xiii. 5.

“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is IN CHRIST JESUS.”—2 Tim. i. 13.

OUR previous meditation might appropriately have formed the conclusion of this Volume: the eternal union and communion of the believer with an ever-living Lord in heaven.

But there is one all momentous *practical* question which seems still to demand the special consideration of every reader. How do I know that all this wealth of present bliss and everlasting glory is mine? ‘*Am I IN CHRIST?*’

The entire verse from the Apostle’s 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians, of which the first words above quoted are a part, distinctly state that there are certain *data* by which this personal problem may be accurately solved. To express it differently, there are certain plain, palpable tests and characteristics furnished in Holy Scripture, by which we can approxi-

mately, at all events, determine our relation to God, and our warrant to say in the language (we have often quoted) of him who thus penned his own monogram—"I know¹ a man IN CHRIST."

Surely we may say, in premising, of supremest importance to each of us is the answer to that question. '*Out of Christ*,'—outside the clefts of the Rock—we are exposed to the fury of the storm. "*Out of Me*" (apart from Me), says the Saviour Himself, "ye can do nothing" (John xv. 5). Nor can there be any neutral ground—any possibility of compromise here. An old writer tersely expresses it, "*Halfway to Christ is a dreadful place.*" On the other hand, we have written to little purpose in the preceding pages, if we have failed to set forth the glorious converse; alike the freeness of the Gospel invitation, and the inviolable security and peace to be found IN CHRIST. *With Him* (*in Him*), we are safe for time, safe for eternity. It was the presence of the Ark in the Wilderness of old—the symbol of the Jehovah-Angel's presence—which guaranteed Israel's safety. When the Ark moved, they moved; when the Ark rested, they rested. The prayer of Moses is very remarkable. It was not, 'Take us safe to Canaan': but rather (if we may venture to give his petition a Gospel rendering)—to be, IN CHRIST;—within the shadow of the Pillar-Cloud by day, and the Fiery Column by night:—"If THY presence go

¹ "I know," not 'knew,' as in our authorised version.—See Alford's Greek Testament *in loc.*

not with us, carry us not hence" (Ex. xxxiii. 15). Happy for those of us who can say, with some good measure of lowly confidence, in the words of one who knew more than others of this blissful shelter of the great Anti-typical *Shekinah*, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3).

Let us restrict ourselves, at present, to two such texts afforded by our Apostle, and which he groups together in the second of our motto-verses—"In *faith* and *love* which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. i. 13).

(1.) The first of these characteristics here mentioned is *FAITH in Christ*. It would be to rehearse the best-known and most significant utterances, both of Gospels and Epistles, were we to attempt enumerating the various passages in which this elementary Christian grace is referred to. Take a few specimen sayings of the Redeemer Himself. It is, if I may so call it, the leading and prominent feature in His own repeated manifestoes. "Come unto Me" (Matt. xi. 28). "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37). "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." "He that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die" (John xi. 25, 26). "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever BELIEVETH IN HIM should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24). "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii. 37, 38). So also in the Great Intercessory Prayer—"For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me" (John xvii. 8).

To pass from the sayings of the Master to those of His faithful Apostles. One of Paul's most familiar exhortations in one of the most memorable incidents of his history was—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31). "For," says he in another epistle, "though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your *faith* IN CHRIST" (Col. ii. 5). "The righteousness which is of faith" is a remarkable assertion of his towards the close of his Roman Epistle—"speaketh on this wise. . . . If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt *believe* in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 6, 9). The Beloved disciple again and again echoes

the same assertion—"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John v. 1). "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 John v. 10). Quotations might be almost indefinitely multiplied; but those given are enough to show, that "coming" to Christ, "confessing" Christ, "believing in" Christ: in other words, the exercise of a simple appropriating faith in Him and in all the benefits of His purchase, form one incontrovertible evidence to every anxious inquirer, of God "dwelling in Him, and he IN GOD" (John iv. 15). "Only live in this faith, walk in it, and act in it, and as surely as Christ lived by the Father, so shall every member of His body live by the strength and wisdom of its Head."¹

With this foundation text before us, we can adopt the words of the Saviour's Valedictory discourse and say, "At THAT day" (the day of your coming to Me, and reposing on Me), "ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye IN ME, and I in you" (John xiv. 20).

(2.) The second characteristic, here mentioned by the Apostle, is LOVE:—"in faith and *love*, which is in Christ Jesus." When these two sacred graces have revealed themselves, they confidently tell that the soul has become an adjunct of the Great living Temple.

Let us here also listen, in the first instance, to the Saviour's own emphatic testimony: "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father" (John xiv. 21).

¹ "Memorials of a Quiet Life," vol. ii. p. 213.

"The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God" (John xvi. 27). Our Apostle refers in many passages to this new and indispensable evidence of the spiritual life. He speaks not only of that divine love, like the sun in the heavens flooding the soul, but the soul becoming itself a willing recipient. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us" (Rom. v. 5). Again, "The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Cor. v. 14). "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God" (2 Thess. iii. 5). It is, moreover, remarkable the frequency with which St. Paul *combines*, as we find him doing in this same verse at the head of the chapter, both testing principles of Faith and Love; as if they were the two co-ordinate and inseparable factors in the Christian's inner life—"Putting on the breastplate of *faith* and *love*" (1 Thess. v. 8). In one of the most glowing passages of his writings we have a similar conjunction in a more extended form—"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. iii. 12, 17-19); while his closing benediction in the same Epistle is—"Peace be to the brethren, and *love* with

faith" (Eph. vi. 23). Though he reverses the order, hear, in his salutation to his beloved Philemon, the groundwork of thanksgiving to God on his behalf—"Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints" (Philemon 5). And once more, see how in writing to his son Timothy he entwines, so to speak, faith and love with his monogram—"And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love, which is IN CHRIST JESUS" (1 Tim. i. 14). In the General Epistle of Jude we have the same juxtaposition of the two Christian graces. It seems as if *Faith* brings first within the divine fortress, and then, armed with the holy breastplate of *Love*, we pace in safety the battlements, and keep sacred vigil within.—"But ye beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy FAITH, . . . keep yourselves in the LOVE of God" (Jude 20, 21). The venerable St. James speaks of "the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that *love* Him" (James i. 12). As in the case of the Apostle of the Gentiles, how beautifully also does the Apostle of the Circumcision combine the two graces, putting moreover in the lips of his converts the familiar monogram—"Whom having not seen, ye *love*; IN WHOM, though now ye see Him not, yet *believing*, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. i. 8). Could the latter Apostle ever forget how solemnly the 'love-test' was addressed to himself: and that, too, in words of more touching adjuration than ever fell on

mortal ear: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" We need be least of all surprised to meet with this evidence of *love* reiterated in the Epistles of the Disciple of Love. We find St. John adducing it, first in a negative shape: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him" (1 John ii. 15). Then, to take one out of many beautiful and expressive passages in his Epistles, in which it is brought before us in a positive form—"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John iv. 16). This atmosphere of love, breathed and inhaled by every "*man IN CHRIST*," includes along with the love of God the love of the Brotherhood. Deepest in the centre, its waves send their circling eddies to the circumference of humanity;—"If we love one another, His love is perfected in us." "We *know* that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John iii. 14). "Be ye kind," says St. Paul, in a beautiful passage (Eph. iv. 32), where, yet again, his *monogram* (which occurs in the original) is misrendered, and indeed practically omitted, in our authorised translation—"Be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God *IN CHRIST* hath forgiven you."¹

Can we, with some lowly measure of assured confidence, subscribe the twofold test which the Apostle

¹ ὁ Θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ, not "*for Christ's sake*," as in the English version.

has thus submitted to us? Has faith, the elder-born of the two graces, reached out its hand, and touched the golden sceptre? Have we *looked* to Christ? Have we *come* to Christ? Have we *received* Christ? Then, further, and in conjunction with this, are we conscious of a faith "which worketh by love:" a faith which has born within us new thoughts of God? Has the dread feeling which once surrounded our every conception of Him—the Awful, the Incomprehensible—passed away; and do we feel the loving affection of children, engendered and cherished towards our Father in Heaven, and the Brother in our nature on the Throne? In a word, can we take up and appropriate the twin challenge of the two great leaders in the Apostolic Church? Can we make St. Paul's noble avowal of a personal faith, which thus at the end of his consecrated life rises to its climax—"I know whom I have BELIEVED, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him"? (2 Tim. i. 12). Can we make St. Peter's equally memorable declaration (it may be, like him, with trembling lip, yet too with honest sincerity of heart and purpose,— "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I LOVE Thee"? (John xxi. 17).



XXX.

AM I IN CHRIST?

"Know ye not your own selves, how that JESUS CHRIST is in you, except ye be reprobates."—2 Cor. xiii. 5.

THE tests spoken of in the preceding chapters would be incomplete without the addition of one other.

To "faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus," must be added their necessary adjunct and concomitant—"Without HOLINESS no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14). Indeed, faith and love would be spurious, mere names and counterfeits, unless this latter be their expression and outcome. The Divine Master himself tells of the impossibility otherwise of entering the fortress of *Love*. He makes holiness an essential condition, so to speak, of abiding within that fortress. "*If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love*" (John xv. 10). And how frequently He reiterates the same assertion. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John xiv. 15); "also, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth

Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (John xiv. 21). "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with Him" (John xiv. 23). "He that abideth in Me, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John xv. 5). While assuring them that all within the compass of His Omnipotence to bestow will be theirs in answer to prayer, hear the divine postulate—"If ye *abide* in Me, and *My words abide in you*, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you" (John xv. 7). Equally impressive is His converse utterance of warning:—"Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away" (John xv. 2). Holiness is the key-note to the whole teaching of His Sermon on the Mount. With what righteous emphasis does He discard mere barren, intellectual assent to doctrine, if dis severed from purity of heart, and assimilation to the divine will and character—"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven". (Matt. vii. 21). In His intercessory prayer, His petitions to the Father are, if we may so express it, supported and strengthened with the plea—"Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me, and *they have kept Thy word*" (John xvii. 6). After His work on earth was completed, how solemnly does He dwell, in later injunctions from His glorified lips to the Churches in

Asia, on the necessity of a spirit of holiness in all (whether in a corporate or individual capacity) who are IN HIM! How repeated, in these divine epilogues also (just as we have noted in the course of His earthly ministry)—are His monitions against an inoperative and uninfluential faith—a cold formal love! To take one as an example. "I know," says He to the Church of Sardis, "thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard; and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee!" (Rev. iii. 1-3). While to those of that same Church who had their "garments undefiled" (ver. 4), in other words, who had attained to holiness of heart and life, He appends the beautiful promise—"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His Angels" (ver. 5).

Is it needful for us to adduce any passages of similar import from the writings of St. Paul? All our preceding meditations on his monogram are filled with imperative injunctions as to the cultivation and development of this inner grace of sanctification. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, there-

fore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are His" (1 Cor. vi. 20). "IN WHOM," as a resultant necessity of this mystical union and incorporation, (to revert to a familiar verse), "all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an *holy* temple in the Lord: IN WHOM ye also are builded together for an habitation in God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 21, 22). "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. iv. 3). In the Epistle to the Colossians, (where, as we have also previously seen, the oneness of the believer with his Saviour is very specially referred to), the great end and object of that mystical union is thus stated—"And you . . . hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and un-reproveable in His sight" (Col. i. 21, 22). The central portion and kernel of his prayer in behalf of the same Church is—"That ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. i. 9, 10). "They that are Christ's," says he, in writing to the Galatians, "have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. v. 24). To like purpose in Ephesians i. 4, believers are said to be "chosen IN HIM before the foundation of the world, that they should be *holy* and without blame before Him in love." In the sublimest chapter of his great Epistle, in speak-

ing of "the called according to His purpose," he adds—"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate *to be conformed to the image of His Son*" (Rom. viii. 28, 29). The summing up of that same doctrinal epistle begins with the adjuration—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, *holy*, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. xii. 1). Nor can we forget how, in an earlier part, these most solemn words confront us (we know none more solemn in Scripture or that should lead to deeper heart-scrutiny)—"If any man have not the spirit of Christ, *HE IS NONE OF HIS*"! (Rom. viii. 9). Without adverting to the disputed authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we have there at all events this Pauline declaration—"For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Heb. iii. 14).

These testimonies would be incomplete without including another of "the glorious company of the Apostles;"—him whose own distinctive and favourite 'monogram' undoubtedly was, "*God is love*": as if he had no room for any other thought or test. Yet listen to a few of His utterances as to Love's needful and essential complement. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth" (1 John i. 6). "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him. Whosoever is born of

God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God " (1 John iii. 6, 9). "And he that keepeth His commandments, dwelleth in Him, and he in Him; and hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1 John iii. 24). While adopting in its glorious plenitude the formula of his "beloved brother," the aged Seer of Ephesus may be heard to sum up all in the earnest exhortation—"And every man that hath this hope IN HIM *purifieth himself*, even as He is pure" (1 John iii. 3).

Thus, then, have we seen, in this and the foregoing meditation, that Faith, Love, and Holiness are the three consecrated occupants of the regenerated soul, ministering Levites in the spiritual Temple—a trinity of divine forces in the new nature of "the man *in Christ*." And it is through the operation and development of these three divine principles that the end and object of Redemption, in the case of each member of the Church is attained—"That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye IN HIM, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. i. 12).

But it may be said, and said truly, do we not, in the assertion of these solemn verities

"Soar too high,
For sinful man beneath the sky"?

Does not the believer—he, whose peerless privilege we have seen throughout to be IN CHRIST—ever and

anon, by reason of his own backsliding—(faithless, and loveless seasons), grievously imperil his spiritual and everlasting safety ?

We have adverted to that same question more than once in the course of this Volume. But the necessity of guarding, alike against discouragement and misapprehension is so great; that we offer no apology for recurring to the subject, in connection with the special topic of this chapter. We reply then, as we have previously done, that, in the highest sense of the word, the believer's standing-ground in his Saviour is unassailable. Blessed be God, in respect of the Great covenant relation as 'the Redeemed of the Lord, whom He *HATH* redeemed out of the hand of the enemy,' His people cannot be finally relegated under the old bondage of sin and death. Redeemed once, they are redeemed for ever. "He *hath* broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder" (Ps. cvii. 16). In another and sadder acceptation, however, there may be (in the case of most there are) grievous relapses, it may even be painful experiences and memories of guilt and shortcoming:—the consciousness of oft-abused mercies, scorned grace. The sun may be there; *it is* there; but his glorious disc is hidden and obscured by enfolding clouds: clouds which our own faithlessness and sin have gathered:—"Thou didst hide Thy face and I was troubled" (Ps. xxx. 7). Oh! it is surely no small comfort to those who *have* undergone, or may be undergoing, these terrible experiences, that Christ Himself,

—He who knoweth our frame,—who can enter, as no other can, with sensitive tenderness into the frailties of His tried and tempted people—recognises the possibility of such falls and collapses. Hear His own words to those who were the most favoured recipients of His presence and fellowship—"Behold the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and *ye shall leave Me ALONE*" (John xvi. 32). They *did* leave Him 'alone':—the saddest and mournfulest hour of His and their history. The hour when loyal allegiance and fidelity were most needed and demanded; then, yes, *then*, the very body-guard of the Prince of Life, as we know well, turned renegade, despite of a recent solemn appeal that might have effectively rung its deterrent accents in their ears—"Will *ye* also go away?" They fled, panic-stricken, in coward ingratitude, amid the moonlit groves of Olivet. The Vessel that had so long and lovingly sheltered them, they abandoned to the fury of the storm. How soon had they forgotten the conditional promises which, as we have seen, had so lately been addressed to them—"If ye abide *IN ME*;" and its sad converse, "Without *Me*!"

We repeat, it is, alas! the too truthful rehearsal of human experience still. "*IN CHRIST*," and yet betrayed into grievous sin! Oh, how dreadful the character which, in such case, that sin assumes! Sin committed *IN CHRIST*! How abominable in the sight of "Him that is *HOLY*, Him that is *True*"—the defiling of that

Temple "*whose Temple are ye*"! Yes, and what a loud call surely to the believer to exercise the most scrupulous watchfulness and vigilance, lest, in some unguarded moment, he may be led thus to inflict foul dishonour on his Lord, as well as leave some indelible stain on his own conscience: the soul, which ought to be a mirror reflecting the Saviour's image, irretrievably blurred and shattered!

We have taken the saddest phase of spiritual aberration; and even if there be no such overt, or positive act of sin, faith and love and holiness may at times be dimmed from other causes, too varied and numerous to specify,—each heart, knowing its own bitterness. But, be these experiences what they may; even in the lowest extremities, "in darkness and in the deeps," cannot *Hope*, "the song-bird"—the nightingale of the soul,—awake its reviving melody still, as of old, amid the deepening shadows and surging waves—"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy water-spouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command His loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. . . . Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him" (Ps. xlii. 7, 8, 11). Note, it is prayer, the cry of the new creature IN CHRIST, which restores the joys of salvation. See in that allegorical picture in the Song of Songs, how the Bride found at last her long-forfeited Lord. She simply *sought* Him. Prayer was her resort. Leaving the

darkened city, her footsteps carry her from hill to hill, and from valley to valley, wherever she deems it likely her Gracious Shepherd may be. The cry of a broken heart is heard. But observe too, it is a cry of unquenched love (for even to the Heart-Searcher she can own "*whom my soul loveth*") :— "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon" (Sol. Song i. 7).

If any eyes, dim with sadder than tears of bereavement, trace these lines, do not despair. "Cast thy burden" (the heaviest supposable one) "on the Lord, He will sustain thee;" He will release thee. The enemy may do his best to drive thee to despondency; but take our monogram, as we find it in the lips of the same Old Testament Saint—when "tears had been his meat day and night;" smarting under the cruel, yet he felt merited sarcasm, of those who said unto him, "Where is now thy God?" They with their philosophy of despair would have him leave his covenant-shelter, and like a maimed and wounded bird betake himself to other refuges. What is his answer? Confident of his position as a child of that covenant, and with his perch, though all unworthy of it, on the sheltering boughs of the Tree of Life—"IN THE LORD," is his reply, "put I my trust: why say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain"? (Ps. xi. 1.)

"Oh thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?"

God will not reject the sighings and aspirations of the penitential spirit. The promise is ever sure—"They that seek *shall* find." It may be uphill struggle; oft-baffled purposes—

"An infant crying in the night—
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry."

It may be the efforts of the chained eagle, flapping his wings—straining his eye for blue vault and everlasting hills. But "HE satisfieth the *longing* soul:" and it is only one of His thousand assured promises—"Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. xl. 30, 31). "The waves," says Chrysostom, "are many and the storm is furious; but I fear not to be drowned, for I stand upon a Rock." It is by more fully realising not only that we are *on* the Rock, but *in* the Rock (IN CHRIST), that the words become to us an assurance as well as a precept—"Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Rom. vi. 14). "The most effectual way in which a Christian can get the better of a particular fault, is by cultivating the root of all holiness, *by endeavouring to obtain a closer union with Jesus Christ*, and to acquire more of that blessed Spirit . . . which will enable him to conquer all his corrup-

tions, and to improve and strengthen all his Christian graces.”¹

“At that day,” therefore, (may we once more employ the Saviour’s own utterance and say)—“At that day” (the day of Faith and Love and Holiness; it may be added, the day of godly sorrow, the day which listens to the moanings of the contrite in heart), “ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.” We may, in a similar spiritual acceptance, append words spoken by the same Divine lips at the same solemn time. What accents of comfort to every sorrowing wanderer, bewailing, through his own self-forfeiture, the loss of the Great Shepherd! “And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you” (John xvi. 22).

¹ William Wilberforce’s Letter to his Son. Life of Bishop Wilberforce, vol. i. page 11.



XXXI.

CONCLUSION.

"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum."—
Heb. viii. 1.

"Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph IN
CHRIST."—2 Cor. ii. 14.

IN this closing chapter or 'Epilogue,' we may appropriately sum up with the above comprehensive verse not yet included in our list of the Apostle's Monogram, but which seems admirably to focus, and gather into one, the preceding meditations. It is a prolonged echo of the strain now so familiar to us—" *Thanks be unto God, which ALWAYS causeth us to triumph IN CHRIST.*"

"Victory IN CHRIST."

"This," says the Apostle John, "is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." But faith is not an abstraction. It derives its invincible power from reposing on a living *Person*. The soldier on the field may have many incentives to heroic deed: the goodness of his cause,—the vantage-ground he occupies,—the bravery of his comrades,—the precision and

superiority of his weapons,—the approval of his country. But, after all, that which in the thick of the fight best nerves his arm and imparts steadiness and daring, is the confidence he reposes in his leader.

This too, in the noblest sense, is the source and secret of the Christian's faith. "Behold," says Isaiah, speaking of the great Captain of Salvation of a future age, "I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people" (Isa. lv. 4). "Finally," says our Apostle, in preluding his enumeration of the Christian's panoply—"Finally, my brethren, be strong IN THE LORD, and in the power of His might" (Eph. vi. 10). "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST." "We are *more* than *conquerors* through Him (and IN HIM) that loved us."

In Paul's case, the thanksgiving embodied in our motto-verse was, in the first instance, a grateful tribute-offering for the blessing with which his Evangelical labours had been crowned, as he carried the glad tidings from city to city and kingdom to kingdom :— "making manifest," as he adds, "the *savour* of His knowledge by us in every place" :—a reference probably to the fragrant odour of flowers and aromatics scattered by the hand of slaves in the triumphal chariot of the earthly conqueror. But the words are of general acceptation. They form a befitting pæan on the lips of all, whose lives, in the oft-quoted phrase of previous chapters, are "hid with Christ in God."

Let them suggest, as a brief recapitulation of our subject, these three successive experiences of triumph:—

Triumph IN CHRIST through *Life*. Triumph IN CHRIST at *death*. Triumph IN CHRIST through *Eternity*.

I. Triumph in Christ *through Life*. This including a double victory over life's *temptations* and life's *afflictions*. Regarding both may it be said—"Ye are complete IN HIM."

'*Temptations!*' how manifold are these! Their name is legion. Assaulting and ensnaring too, as we have found, when least dreamt of. It is indeed often, —(generally)—when the sentinel is asleep or dallying with his weapons, that the fatal blow is delivered: and to the last hour of earth the soul bears too legibly upon it the scars of battle. Like a wounded bird with drooping wing, it is never again able to soar, as aforetime, carolling up to heaven's gate.

What is one efficacious and potential safeguard against such assaults, be they great or small? It is just taking Paul's motto and monogram as our watchword, not at specific times, but at all times, with its energising motives and obligations—"I am IN CHRIST!" To revert to the illustration and analogy just employed. The chivalrous and faithful soldier feels, that in his unfaltering courage is bound up, not only his own honour, but in a broader sense the honour of the army to which he belongs: he is animated by what the sister language significantly expresses by the

well-known phrase—“*Esprit de corps*.” He feels that any coward wavering—any tergiversation on his part, would involve alike infidelity to his oath and allegiance, tamper with the prowess of his comrades, and tarnish the fair fame of his leader. How it would serve to keep us in the path of duty and rectitude, and to avert many a moral disaster, if we were thus more constantly to realise the soldier-feeling—“I am not my own.” “I have sworn unto the Lord, and I will perform!” When I was stretched on that bed of sickness:—when I approached that Communion table—when at that great crisis-hour of imminent peril, confronting death in all its stern reality, I recorded the resolve, in the spirit, if not in the words of Bunyan’s hero—“Put my name down, sir, for I too am to be one of the host of the Lord!” I am “IN CHRIST”—enrolled in His army, with the vow of consecration to be “His faithful soldier and servant to life’s end”:—and “they that *are Christ’s* have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.” As such, how can I dare violate my covenant engagements? how can I dare blot my escutcheon or surrender my standard? “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” “IN CHRIST:”—that, borne with us as a talisman in every hour of the perilous warfare, would enable us not only to triumph over the baser temptations of our lower natures, but it would raise and elevate the whole standard of life. It would lead to the scorn and rejecting of all base compliances, and underhand deal-

ings, and equivocal transactions. It would nurture and foster purity of motive, calmness of temper, transparency of purpose, rectitude and generosity of deed:—in a word, ‘the beauty of holiness.’ And when temptation, “the thorn in the flesh,” whatever form that assumes, comes to ‘buffet’ us, then we would meet the assault, as Paul met it, with a deeper consciousness alike of his own weakness and of his dependence on the Saviour’s promised strength—“I will make My grace sufficient for thee; I will perfect strength in weakness.” Secure within this unassailable stronghold, he adds—“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” *“Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph IN CHRIST !”*

What is true of the temptations of life, is true also of the counterpart experience—its *afflictions*.

The believer cannot be said to triumph *over* them; (many is “the deadly wound” that is never healed in this world)—but he triumphs *in* them; *in* and *through* Christ. Yes, and though triumph be a joyful word, it is not too jubilant a term to use when accepted thus. Look at Paul’s own case. His afflictions, though of a peculiar cast—differing essentially from ours, were nevertheless of the acutest as well as of the most diversified character. Yet, listen how he speaks of them! Here was a man who was denuded of all personal comforts. His life has now, to *us*, a halo of glory and grandeur thrown around it,—but, at

the time, to himself, it was a succession of painful humiliations;—a battle, single-handed, against serried ranks;—a history of captivity and dungeon and fasting and shipwreck. He was beaten with lictor's rods; stoned by infuriated Jews; exposed to burning suns, and cutting winds, and winter seas; denounced as base and babbler, filth and offscouring; nevertheless, see how in the sublime consciousness of union and communion with his living Lord, he not only rises himself, and exhorts his fellow-Christians to rise, superior to all denunciation,—but he speaks of his sufferings as being actual causes of *rejoicing* (Col. i. 24). Or does he address others, his fellow-comrades in the great fight of afflictions? It is no dirge he puts into their lips. It is rather a song of gratitude and thanksgiving:—as if, despite of all its trials, life—being life IN CHRIST—was a rich banquet of luxuries—a perpetual feast. “I thank my God alway on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ—*that in everything ye are enriched by Him*” (1 Cor. i. 4, 5).

It is the same with the Redeemer's sorrowing people in every age. In their season of trial they are assured of His tender exalted sympathy. “In all their afflictions He is afflicted.” “He alone,” says Augustine, “never loseth what is dear to Him; to whom all things are dear IN HIM who is never lost.” “If,” is the testimony of another of later years, who knew well personally the joyful reality of which she

speaks—"If we could realise anything of the height and depth of that mysterious *life*—we should be kept in peace, even though the sea should roar in its fulness. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters: yea, and in His strength we too should be strong: our vision would be, like His, eternal: we should see and feel assured that all things are good."¹ Then would what is called acquiescence in God's will not be—as often it is—the reluctant submission of the slave flogged to his cell—stoically accepting the inevitable:—but the free, spontaneous resolving of our own wills into the will of a Higher and Better and Kinder: finding it a joy and privilege to have these coincident with His:—through our tears able, calmly and resignedly, to say—"*Thanks be to God which always*"—(yes, too, and in the gloomiest valleys of earth)—"*causeth us to triumph IN CHRIST.*"

II. But this triumph is not only over the temptations and afflictions of life. Keeping up the figure of our motto-verse, it extends to the last—the closing hour of the conflict, of which we have spoken in recent chapters. It is *triumph IN CHRIST over death*.

Not always in the experience of the believer is there triumph over the *fear* of death. We have known many of God's saintliest and holiest who "through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

¹ "Memorials of a Quiet Life," vol. ii. p. 254.

An illustrative case, through the long vista of bygone years, rises to the memory of the writer. It was that of one who in every sense might be called a ripe Christian. Through the vicissitudes of a high-toned consistent life she was "strong in faith—giving glory to God." But the Valley-entrance could never be contemplated without dread. The brightness of 'the fields of living-green' were obscured by the mists which hung over the intervening border-river. In this case, however, as in all other kindred ones we have known, it was, if not triumphant, at least calm and resolute faith and joy at last. When the river-brink *was* reached—the darkness was past and the true light shone. The waves divided before the Ark of the Covenant, and the once trembling one went through dry-shod. Not before, but when the supreme moment arrived, dying grace was given for the dying day; and the unailing promise (never more reliable than in the hour of departure) was made good—"As thy day is, so shall thy strength be."

And what is the secret of that assured final triumph? It is, again, the glorious covenant-security—"IN CHRIST." All other hopes—all other grounds of confidence—are then discarded. Every other weapon by which the battles of the Lord have been fought are then sheathed: the familiar words have a significance then they never possessed before—

"On Christ the solid rock I stand;
All other grounds are shifting sand."

Mason Good's last utterance was, "The Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." Simeon of Cambridge exclaims, seeking in life and in death the habitual attitude of *nearness* to his Saviour—"This is my one ambition; to live with one Mary at my Saviour's feet, listening to His words; and to die with the other Mary, washing His feet with my tears and wiping them with the hairs of my head" (*Simeon's Memoirs*). The dying words of the great Indian missionary (though in the exhaustion of the final struggle he was only able to whisper them) were these—"I am very low and cannot say much—but I am living habitually IN HIM."¹ Or, listen to the experience of the greatest of missionaries. St. Paul's own death-cry, (to use the earthly phrase) 'expiring in the arms of victory,' was the same—"IN CHRIST." If, as the closing hours of his mortal life were gathering around him,—some would have been disposed to speak of other apparently solid grounds of confidence and congratulation, and to whisper in his ear—"Think, faithful man! of all thy toils and sufferings:—thy privations and sacrifices: ever ready to be roused when the bugle-notes summoned to duty and conflict. Think (all for others and not for self) of thy perils of the sea—thy perils of the wilderness—buffeting the ruder storms of human violence and hate. Think of taunt and curse willingly borne,—stocks and stripes and

¹ "Life of Alexander Duff, D.D.," vol. ii. p. 535.

chains and darkness; the hate of merchant prince, the rage of imperial soldier:—the virulence of bigot Jew: the contempt of philosophic prejudice and scorn. Think of thy present noble resolve: the consecration of a life about to be crowned and consummated by the consecration of death,—willingly “pouring out existence,”¹ as a libation on God’s altar.’

‘Away,’ he would say, ‘the impious thought.’ I glory alone in my old avowal. I am “*a man IN CHRIST.*” My confidence,—my trust, my hope, my joy,—my last hymn of triumph is ‘*IN HIM.*’ I have overcome,—but it is “through the blood of the Lamb.” “I have fought the good fight,” but it is *IN HIM.* “I have finished my course,” but it is *IN HIM.* “I have kept the faith,” but it is *IN HIM.* “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,” but it is *IN HIM.* “*The Lord, the righteous Judge will give me on that day.*” And as the chariot of fire has reached the gates of heaven, we seem to catch as if the last word, ere he mingles his voice with that of ministering seraphim—“*Thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph IN CHRIST.*”

This thought brings me to the last point.

III. Triumph *IN CHRIST* through *Eternity.*

The triumph of the believer is in one sense ended

¹ So is it in the original (*σπένδομαι*), a word used by heathen writers in connection with the oil and wine poured on the head of sacrificial victims.

at death. The true battle is then over: the weapons of conflict laid aside: the armour ungirded: eternal rest entered: "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away" (Rev. xxi. 4). Be it so. But the notes of the victor's song have no such ending. As with the Israelites, who on crossing the Red Sea and seeing Pharaoh's hosts and his chariots submerged in its depths, made its farther shores to re-echo with praise: so shall it be with the Redeemed from among men. In one of the grandest glimpses we have of Heaven in the Book of Revelation—"the harpers on the glassy sea" are heard uplifting their voices in a song, with a twofold theme, to Him who has upon His head "many crowns." It is an eternal *Epinikion*:—the song of Providence and the song of Grace. "They sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (Rev. xv. 3).

In that same Book, alike in its opening and its closing visions, is Christ made the object of adoration and triumph by the countless multitudes which no man can number. In the earlier vision, the triumphant hymn is, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain" (Rev. v. 12). In the later, the song of victory is represented—not only as an everlasting pæan—but deepening as the ages on ages advance. As if each new cycle in the eras of eternity evolved new matter and new motive for praise. At first, it is heard as "the noise

of much people"—deeper still, as "the sound of a great multitude"—till the augmenting volume becomes as the roll of "many waters" and the roar of "mighty thunderings"—"Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" (Rev. xix. 6).

We can imagine the strain of each solitary member of that mighty chorus:—the joyful testimony of each redeemed soul: as it recalls the past and links the past with the boundless future. The successful resistance of that fiery temptation—Thanks be to God for the triumph IN CHRIST! The manifestation of submission under that desolating trial;—the whispering through hot tears of anguish, "Thy will be done"—Thanks be to God for the triumph IN CHRIST! The disarming of the King of terrors—the dismissal of fear in the hour of death and the calm entrance into the world of spirits—Thanks be to God for the triumph IN CHRIST! And now, standing arrayed in these white robes, and holding in my hand the evergreen palm—the emblem and pledge of victory;—the earthly battlefield over and won; and boundless ages before me—these ages the purchase of dying, ever-living Love;—what else can I do but make the old ascription of time the ascription of Eternity—"Thanks be to God, which giveth me the victory through (IN) our LORD JESUS CHRIST."

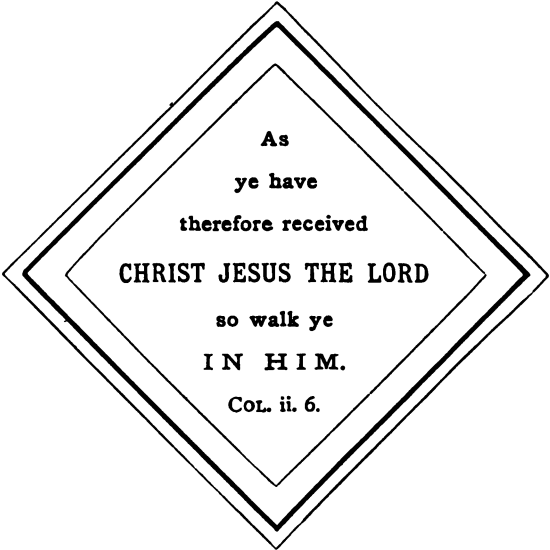
There will be other themes doubtless in the song of the glorified Church,—other sources and experiences of joy and gratulation. There will be the happy con-

sciousness of emancipation from 'the bondage of corruption,'—from all the ills and heartaches of a sin-stricken, woe-worn world,—temptations no longer either felt or dreaded;—deliverance even from the *fear* of fearful things;—joyful communion and association with unfallen angels: the resumption of fellowship with 'the loved and lost' on earth, now the crowned and glorified. But the one key-note of these minor strains—the refrain and chorus of the unending song—will be this—

"THANKS BE TO GOD
WHICH ALWAYS CAUSETH US TO TRIUMPH
IN CHRIST."

IN HOC VINCES





As
ye have
therefore received
CHRIST JESUS THE LORD
so walk ye
I N H I M.
COL. ii. 6.

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